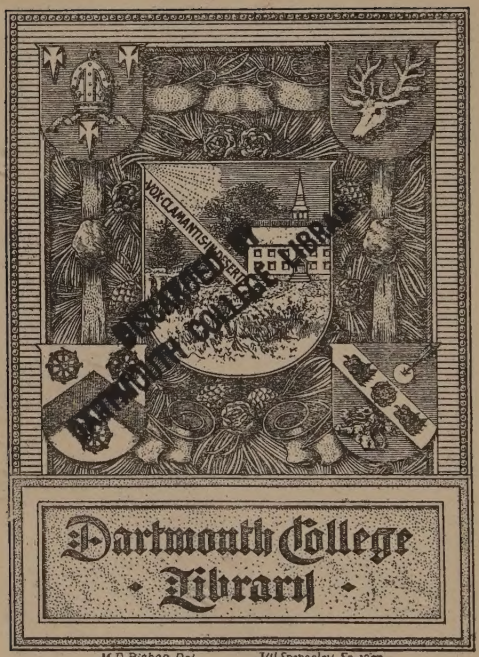

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DAGUERREOTYPES

DAGUERREOTYPES

by

Ada Wallas

(Mrs. Graham Wallas)

NEW YORK

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Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged (ISAIAH li. 1).

TO

FLORENCE HALÉVY

A FOREWORD

THE characters in this book are drawn, with unimportant exceptions, from real people. It has been my hope to give a true picture; but even in a record of recent events memory and imagination are often more nearly akin than we care to admit.

Scenes as they appeared to the eyes of a child sixty years ago are in their nature imperfect. Memory may have transposed facts or changed the sequence of events, or imagination may have made a blurred outline clear. A thought or a saying may be attributed to myself that belonged to one of the other children whose lives and experiences were so near that they were often as vivid to me as my own.

A. W.

August 1929

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DAGUERREOTYPES

CHAPTER I

ANCESTORS

IF, when I was a little girl, I had been asked about my ancestors, I should unhesitatingly have said that I had none; and I might have added that I did not personally know anyone who had. Such people were very far removed from any life with which I came in contact. People with ancestors were for me the kings and queens of England, the heroes and heroines of the few romances I read, and what we townspeople called "the county".

I remember how greatly I was interested the first time that I saw a genealogical tree of the kings of England. I was allowed to examine it and to ponder over it. I saw the broken lines of young sons and daughters who died without issue. I noticed that there were two poor little kings who had died under regencies. To be of kingly descent and to rule under a regent, a kind of glorified male governess, was, I thought, a sad fate.

The name of Queen Elizabeth, never indifferent to a Devon child, had a new interest when I saw it on this tree. So, too, had the name of the tragic Charles, whom I dared not admire because of my nonconformist upbringing, and because Cromwell's name, with no right on such a tree, intruded itself

just below, between Charles I and Charles II. Some of the names were shadows to me, but at the end of them all was that of our own good Queen Victoria.

That day the midday bell rang before I wanted it to, a thing which in school-time had never happened before. Even then my governess, who was interested in genealogies herself, let me linger a moment or two, while she explained that, if we had the facts, the humblest of us could make this wonderful thing for ourselves and trace our families back to Adam.

After this I felt a new sympathy for the old families I read about, who had ghosts and whose heirs were dogged by dreadful curses. I hardly knew whether to envy them or to be glad that simple people like ourselves seemed to be free from such things. There was only one story of this kind that I had read where I whole-heartedly envied the little hero. The spirit of a kindly ancestor kept watch over him. Just at the moment of his life, when in spite of many noble qualities he was going to yield to temptation, the eyes of this ancestor's portrait grew strangely vivid, fixed themselves on the boy, and saved him.

But a much more lasting impression of what the past might mean to a family was made on my mind one day when, after a long walk on Dartmoor with my father, we stopped to be shown over an old country house. At first I suffered far too much from the sense that we were intruders to enjoy its beauty.

The awe in the voice of the old caretaker when she spoke of "the family", and indicated the rooms closed to the public, was such, that I felt it hardly delicate to look at the doors at which she pointed.

But in the picture gallery I forgot the present family. At first I kept close to my father, shyly admiring him, because the questions he asked showed knowledge of the names and dates of the best of the painters. Then I left the others, and looked all alone at the warriors and statesmen and the wonderful ladies who had lived in this house. Some of the men were very splendid in armour or in velvet, others wore wigs and held scrolls. One quite elderly lady had a delightful King Charles spaniel. Another lady bent gracefully over a harp; in the background blue velvet curtains were just looped up to reveal a landscape, a very brown rock, and the suggestion of a ravine. I looked long at a picture of a really beautiful young mother, with her three children at her side. The children, to my short-sighted eyes, seemed to be vaguely attached to their mother and to the sky by blue ribbons, the ends of which had been carefully cut like a swallow's tail. Then I became absorbed in the portrait of a young girl; she had an erection of powdered hair on her head, and a patch or two on her face. The picture may have been a Gainsborough. The girl's expression was what we still called "arch", and she was so eager and so living, that I was quite disappointed when the kind old caretaker, who just then joined me with the others, said it was a portrait

of the present Earl's great-grandmother, and that she had lived to a good old age.

As we walked home I heard my father say something about "Lady ——'s Letters", and he spoke too of some "Memoirs", and I thought how interesting for such a family the past must be.

But my great and great-great-grandparents were different. The women had no harps, no spaniels, no portraits. The men were labourers, craftsmen, or small yeomen, whose letters, when they had written letters, no one would think worth keeping beyond the limits set by personal affection. There were no Memoirs. I had nothing to help my imagination to reconstruct the smallest part of their vanished lives. When I tried to think of them I saw a row of stiff and misty figures, all old men and women, dressed in the fashion of the period of the grandfather I knew.

My history lessons had left me with the impression that the time between the days of Elizabeth and our own was covered by an arid waste of facts. Stirred by Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* and Macaulay's *Armada*, I could not stand on Plymouth Hoe without a thrill, and I never doubted that Drake did a wonderfully cool and wise thing in going on with his game of bowls with an enemy in sight. We children often talked of the unspeakable audacity of the Spanish admiral, who meant, we were told, when he had conquered England, to live at Mount Edgecombe—our Mount Edgecombe, where in the month of May, through the green oak leaves, sheets

of bluebells almost touched the changing blue of the sea. We looked out at the Sound with as much pride as if we had just returned from chasing such impertinence up the Channel. Since those great days nothing in our history books interested me; and at home, when the past was spoken of, it was almost always in connection with praise of the present, from my grandfather, who spoke of the blessings of peace with an emotion that I did not understand, to my father who welcomed with boyish enthusiasm the good things offered to his children, and especially the opening of liberal education and of the old universities to nonconformists. Grandfather would speak too with gratitude of the opportunities of safe investments now offered to thrifty and God-fearing men. We heard grandfather tell of the time when people of his persuasion suffered from humiliating restrictions on the ceremonies of birth and marriage. He only used the word "persecution" in my hearing once, and I have never forgotten the tone of his voice or the emphasis he laid on the word. One day I was sitting at the table in the great bow-window of our dining-room. I was working the words "Forget-me-not" on a perforated cardboard bookmarker. I was very busy, and eager to finish the lettering that I might put a little blue flower in the corner. My mother and my grandfather were sitting in two great leather-covered armchairs, opposite to each other, one on each side of the mantelpiece. Grandfather was telling my mother that a deacon of our chapel had

refused to pay the church-rate, and that rather than do so he had let the authorities take away his umbrella-stand. I grew so interested that I dropped my work and listened. I knew the deacon—a man with a square head and a strong will. An umbrella-stand! I could have parted with an umbrella-stand without a sigh. Still, it was like listening to an exciting drama in a dimly understood foreign tongue. Grandfather's emotion as he said the word "persecution" was infectious. For him the square-headed deacon was taking his place among those who had lived and died for their faith, and who had given us the life whose great opportunities of serving God and man we so often forgot.

Everyone seemed glad that we were free from a past that had hurt and hampered. Our feet were set on the present and our eyes looked towards the future.

But one summer, a year or so later, I learnt for the first time something of our own family in the past. I was allowed to attend a Bible-class that my father gave to my brothers. I was not drawn to it by love of the Second Book of Kings, but I liked to be where my brothers were. I liked to sit in the summer-house dressed in white with a blue hair-ribbon and little sandalled shoes; and I liked my father's voice, with its west-country depth and variety of tone. After the restraint of chapel, with its sixty minutes' sermon, it was good to sit in the summer-house and dream. I had dreamt in chapel too, but always with a sense of guilt, to wake with

a start. If my father called me "Johnny-head-in-air," said that I was "wool-gathering", or asked me whether it was pleasant in the clouds, there was indulgence in his tone, as if perhaps he was not sorry that in our lives there was time for day-dreams. I was surprised to see how much the boys seemed to like this part of the Bible, for it was Alec and Robert themselves who had given me the story books that I found so much more gracious and so much more human; books about the Greek heroes and Undine. Undine was the latest, and I thought, as I looked through the green leaves and heard the water splash and drip, that the plaster boy who upheld the fountain kept the spirit of some wild stream captive there. When the lesson was over, my brothers always got my father to talk, sometimes of Dartmoor and of finding rare plants. But more often that summer Alec would ask questions about our grandparents and our great-grandparents and their relations. There was no danger of dreaming while father talked. I loved to hear of an old relation who took her little son when he was ill to consult the White Witch at Lydford, and was recommended a treatment of spells and morning dew. That connected our family with all the fairy tales that I had ever read. I remember how father smiled at our amazement and said, "The White Witch may not have done much good, but after all, she was a shrewd old lady, and there was little more to be learned from the apothecary in our street."

My father was very proud of his widowed mother's courage and independence, and of the stimulus she gave to all around her by never shirking her own share of work, carrying her half-sack of flour into the bakery on her shoulders with the best. He told us how she had saved money to give her sons, and her daughters too, the best education possible. We liked to hear about her, and if I feared her memory a little, it was not that I had ever heard of her being severe, except to one of my aunts, who had yielded to a desire for mere cheapness and bought some yards of machine-made lace.

The things that my father told us from the past were nearly always about the women of his family; perhaps because quaint and easily remembered things are more closely connected with their lives than with men's, but partly, I am sure, because there were several among them whom our grandparents would have called "notable females". What I learnt was scrappy enough, and I doubt if, even at the time, I knew the exact relationship to us of some of the people of whom my father talked; but from these scraps and others that I had picked up, it dawned on me gradually that our family too had a past and a tradition, a tradition not of beauty or of learning, but of character. Interested as I was, there was something that troubled me in this. I felt vaguely that I was called on to imitate qualities which I dreaded more than I admired.

There was one of our great-grandmothers who, at seventy, walked from Exeter to Plymouth, and

apologized to her children for taking the coach back. There was a great-great-aunt who lived in the Devonshire village from which my father's family came. She kept herself to herself with such strictness that she did not even go to chapel. But on Sundays she read her Bible with a cap of fine Honiton lace on her hair. When she died, by her own wish this cap was buried with her. One day I learnt that my great-great-aunt, with the Honiton lace cap, though she was called by her neighbours "Lady" Kentispeare, had died in poverty. She had refused all help from her sons and would not allow the doctor to come near her. At the end she sent him a polite message to say she was far too ill to see anyone but the members of her own family. I did not like the vivid image of this old lady that was raised by my father's dramatic talk, and it was a relief to turn from her and to catch a glimpse of the home life of our grandmother when she was a little girl. Her mother, our great-grandmother, had ruled her home with firmness and not without enlightenment. What pleased us was that father told us that she loved poetry, and that she often expressed her regret that so many of the poets had not only led bad lives, but had chosen secular subjects to write about. She said, with absolute sincerity, that it must be a shallow mind that could tire of Milton or of the prophet Isaiah; but she admitted that she would have liked a larger choice.

We longed to hear more of those winter evenings in a thatched Devonshire cottage, when great-

grandfather read aloud, and great-grandmother and great-aunt Betty, whom I had known, and the boys our great-uncles sat around the fire, and heard *Paradise Lost*, not for the first time, from beginning to end. I could see the party in the cottage kitchen. We still had, hanging on the wall in our drawing-room, an old blue plate that this family used, and we had their warming-pan. Alec often longed for more details. My father would generally say that he had told us all that he could remember, but one day when we had got up to go indoors he thought of a hitherto forgotten incident. One evening, while they were reading, great-grandmother noticed that little great-aunt Betty's hands lay idly on her knees, and that she was looking at great-grandfather as he read. Great-grandmother saw, too, that great-aunt Betty had finished the duster which she had been given to hem. Great-grandmother would never have dreamt of disturbing her husband while he was reading Milton's verse, nor could she bear to see the hands of a woman-child idle. Silently she took the duster, ripped one side of the neat hem, and returned it to great-aunt Betty, who obediently began to sew her hem all over again. The boys laughed, but I flushed painfully. I wanted to protest, but the bell rang, and we all fled into the house for tea. I ate in silence. I could not forget little great-aunt Betty, nor could I forgive my great-grandmother. After tea I went alone into the garden and walked between the gooseberry bushes on the grass path, pressing and crushing a piece of

lemon verbena in my hands. Looking up suddenly I found that Alec had joined me. We began to walk up and down side by side without speaking. There was nothing new in that; we each went forward with our thinking, as often before. Alec was absorbed in our great-grandparents too, for he said quite suddenly:

"They were fine, those old people."

I stopped short and faced him on the path.

"Fine! How can you say so? Poor, poor little great-aunt Betty! She couldn't say a word! Great-grandmother was like the rest, those others we are always hearing about. And you admire them! How would you like it if your parents would take nothing from you? The girls nursed her, and then when they were most anxious she refused to see a doctor! They may be fine those old grandmothers, but they were hard, hard, hard!"

Tears rose to my eyes, and Alec for a moment was amazed at the strength of my feeling. I was already half ashamed of it, and said, laughing: "Poor little Betty, you don't know what it is. You've never hemmed a duster!"

But Alec was feeling with me now, and we walked on, talking of them all over again, thinking of the members of the family who had not had such strength of character and of what at times they must have suffered. But because it was Alec who spoke, I listened with new interest when, just before we went indoors, he said: "They were fine, though." I waited, I knew that he would say more; but he

was young too, and although he had often found words to explain difficulties to me, this time he hesitated. "But they were fine," he repeated, and then after a break: "They made it all possible." "All what?" I asked still a little grudgingly. "Oh, everything, everything," he said. By his gesture I knew dimly what he wanted to include. "Oh, don't you see," he finished, "they loved good literature and had no respect of persons."

CHAPTER II

MY GRANDFATHER

WHEN my maternal grandfather died at the age of eighty-seven I was nineteen, so that he was an old man all the time that I knew him. He lived with our Aunt Polly, his unmarried daughter, in a tiny villa about a mile from our house. My mother told us that he had begun his working life as a mason. Then there had been a little grocer's shop in Cornwall; what industry and integrity could do with narrow opportunities and moderate business ability he had done; now there was rest in his old age.

It never occurred to us in our childhood that grandfather had small means. He was always dressed in fine black broadcloth with a white choker tie, and as a little child I thought that all very old gentlemen had some indefinite connection with the ministry.

Nothing could have been more generous than his hospitalities, however frugal his own habits. Home-made sponge-cakes that creaked when they were cut; and a cup of tea brought to you when you were called in the morning by the old Cornish servant (a thing unheard of for children in our home) made his house to us a place of luxury. Still, I had heard my father speak of my grandfather's limited income and steady independence; and we all knew even then that one of the chief anxieties

of his old age was his difficulty in balancing his monthly accounts.

Every month my father, however pressing his own work might be, spent a long time with my grandfather persuading him that his financial position was secure. It could hardly be otherwise, since all bills were paid by the week, and every year in spite of his fears he added a little to the savings on which he and his daughter lived. But these facts were difficult to arrive at from the figures in his little account book. It needed all my father's business ability to discover that my grandfather's expenditure was well within his receipts; and to convince the puzzled old man that it was so, was a work that took the patience born of love.

All his children and grandchildren loved him, and there could be no greater tribute to his nature. For his interpretation of his religion was so strict and old-fashioned that his children, though in the main they shared his belief, often smiled at it; while his grandchildren as they grew up put away from them for ever the greater part of his faith. Things of which he disapproved made a large and increasing part of our lives; and our intercourse with some old friends who held his views was so strained that it was only maintained by the double loyalty of our parents to their past and of ourselves to our parents.

In grandfather's presence, however, we all felt freedom to breathe. He had never questioned the reality of heaven and hell. But I remember that

on one of those not unhappy occasions when the old-fashioned child was seen and not heard, he said to my mother, "I have always thought, Agnes, that the most hardened sinner may in his last moments breathe a prayer for forgiveness unknown even to those who are watching by him". He added, quite simply, that we should be surprised at the company we should find in heaven.

This was after a Sunday evening's service, which I think from the vividness of my memory that I must have been just promoted to attend. His words carried comfort, for the sermon had left me vaguely distressed; and I was still more cheered when he went on to say that, eloquent as our minister's warning had been, he himself, if it had pleased God to call him to the ministry, would have chosen to dwell on the exceeding beauty of God's grace as the best means of drawing the young to him.

Grandfather believed in conversion. He referred sometimes to the days before his own conversion as a time of indescribable darkness. From all we knew of his past he had been, even in those black days, a devoted son and a straight-living, honest man; but he always trembled to think of what would have happened to him if he had not been delivered from "the bondage of original sin". It was this doctrine that made me shun the presence of some of the professing Christians of his generation. We never knew when we might be questioned as to the state of our shrinking little souls. But grandfather held aloof. We had been given God-fearing

parents, and God chose his own instruments and his own time. There was always some text in the Bible behind which he sheltered a natural delicacy which had grown stronger with years and experience.

His conversion had been the great fact in his own life, and it added enormously to the number of things he thought it sinful to do; although when other people did them he liked better to use the word "misguided". There were of course the deadly sins—drink, gambling, and everything that he included in the term "loose-living". It was difficult for us to believe that these sins had ever presented great temptations to him; but in the term "gambling" he included, after conversion, not only games played for money, but the taking of a hand at whist, with no other object than to give relief to a tired man, lucky-packets at bazaars, and the modern invention of raffles.

I have wondered since that the teetotum that was kept in the cupboard of his old-fashioned sideboard escaped condemnation. It was the chanciest of games. I have gone home on a winter's afternoon with my pocket well stored with comfits, while my little sister was entirely dependent on my good nature; and I have gone home with an empty pocket. But on this game grandfather smiled and provided the comfits, and I think these comfits, so unfailing and yet of necessity so uncertain in their quantity, must have added to the confusion in his monthly accounts.

Then there were works of fiction. To my grand-

father after conversion the words "profane" and "secular" were almost interchangeable, and under one of these terms he even condemned the stories with a religious tendency that were appearing as serials at that time, and which, it must be told, were read by Aunt Polly. How could Christians who had the infinite treasure of God's Word need such things? And as to fairy tales, with what vain imaginings men filled the hearts and minds of little children! But if Aunt Polly was guilty in this respect it was in the afternoon, when we crowded around her while grandfather took his daily nap, sometimes with Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, or sometimes with the Bible open on his knee.

Grandfather was aware that our parents were lax in some matters, and I have seen the weakness he had for complete sets of books bound in calf, struggle with his grief at finding Lord Byron's works on our shelves. There was a shelf at which he hardly dared to look, for there, as they appeared, the works of Darwin and Huxley were put. Their names were then new to fame, yet not too new for grandfather to have heard them denounced from the pulpit. Then there was dancing. He knew that his daughter Agnes, my mother, even though she let her children learn to dance on the drawing-room carpet, would always protect them from the bad company which he connected with this pastime. But surely, he said, there was a want of dignity in man, or, as he liked to call him, "the only sentient being to whom God has promised immortality", spending precious hours

in learning "to point the toe and poise the body". When all that could be said by my mother in defence was, "It's so good for them, father, they're always poking over books", he went home, feeling that having spoken he could leave the matter, until further light was given, to Agnes.

But there was another point on which he felt more strongly. His grandchildren spent a good deal of their leisure in dressing up and acting little plays and charades to each other and their cousins. Again our parents stood by us, and as a good dissenter grandfather had to admit that it was their consciences that must be their guide and not his. This reflection, and the text, "Judge not that ye be not judged", helped him to maintain a cheerful humanity in many difficulties, and he would drink tea with my mother without any further questions, even although, in a room not far removed, we dressed ourselves in absurd costumes and by mimicking other "sentient beings" sowed the seeds of a love of the stage, "and", he would have added, "its attendant dangers".

Grandfather was not like some of the strict members of his sect, a Predestinarian. He held that in our practical dealings with the world, we should do our best to improve its condition, and even to encourage a little innocent enjoyment of God's many blessings.

In his own life thankfulness was the strongest note. To us the things that moved his gratitude were often matters which we had long taken for

granted. He was thankful for the gas-lit streets. "I can remember, my dear," he said, "when Fore Street was a swamp where young men shot snipe, and our High Street a mere parade for loose-livers." He was thankful for all the improvements in modern houses, whether they had reached his tiny villa or not. Baths, where hot or cold water was turned on at will, were always a marvel to him. He often compared the frequency of the horse-omnibus with the difficulty of transit in his young days, and in the matter of the steam railway, which during the first forty years of his life he had done without, the goodness of God seemed almost overwhelming.

In politics he was a radical. He and his fathers had fought for religious freedom; and the right of marriage and burial without what he called "superstitious observances" had been hardly won. In the Old Testament at election times he found plenty of support for the side to which he gave his vote, and the only time I saw him roused to anger in these matters was at the suggestion that the bread of the people might be again taxed, and the widow and the fatherless oppressed.

In the Old Testament he also found texts that justified his pride in the number of his descendants and their growing prosperity. Nothing would have shocked him more than the idea of awakening vanity in his female relatives, but I can remember that he held that a certain comeliness was pleasing to the Lord. "My dears", I have heard him say, when we went two or three together to visit him,

"God has blessed Agnes with very goodly children", or to one of us, "How comely you look in your new spencer". His kindliness often invented some phrase that got him over difficulties in his dealings with us. For example, although he did not approve of parties, "gatherings of young people" were a natural and innocent pleasure. So we lived in constant touch with him, secure in his generous understanding from any disturbance of our affectionate terms.

In the last few years of his life, when I was growing up, the weakness and restlessness of old age began to tell on him. Aunt Polly was now often tired out with efforts to interest and amuse him. For reading, there were only the well-worn passages of the Bible, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and a volume or two of modern sermons. This was a limited choice from which to divert a man's mind from long days of suffering. For company he had the visits of his children and grandchildren, whose minds and hearts were full of a world of which as a professing Christian he knew little. It seemed as if the desire for novelty and variety which he had put away from him in his youth came strongly over him in his extreme old age. Next door to him lived a very old gentleman, a Church member attending his own chapel, for whom grandfather, when he was in health, had had the greatest respect. Aunt Polly, eager to give him some variety in his daily walks, suggested that he should ask his neighbour to accompany him. At this an irritability, so long under control, broke out. "My dear," he said,

"when I have company, I like it to be company. Mr. J. is a very worthy man, but a person of no intellects. I shall take my walks alone." And this he did, although pride of intellect was the sin of which he had been least guilty.

A few months before he died I sat with him an hour or two to relieve Aunt Polly. There was a fire in the grate of the little drawing-room, the windows were shut, and muslin curtains drawn over them. I had been reading from the Bible the passage which begins: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Surely it was the chapter that grandfather of all people I knew had the greatest right to enjoy. To-day it brought him no comfort; and now that I had finished I was longing against my will for Aunt Polly to return that I might go back to the triumph of spring outside. Grandfather dozed, and I dared not stir or move the Bible from my knee.

Suddenly, he woke, and began to speak. He seemed rested and cheered, and talked of the past and of his youth when, as I kept thinking, Shelley was alive. I asked no questions, for he would hardly have heard me. I was just glad that he had returned to the old mood of thankfulness. Then for a time he rambled, but I knew that he was speaking of the days before his conversion. I longed for Aunt Polly's return. I was young and feared for a moment the confessions of an old man who had lost some of the finenesses of his reticence. It was little enough

that he said and yet, to my surprise, as he talked on, the distance between us seemed to be bridged. He told me that it was the theatre that had been his temptation. Play-going—what it would have led him to, if he had not, just in time, heard a famous preacher, he shuddered to think. His mind was quite clear now. He looked at me with deep sunken eyes that even in health had been sad.

"My dear," he said, "the Playhouse, the Playhouse that has been my besetment."

He wanted my attention and my sympathy, and all I could say in my surprise was:

"The playhouse! grandfather."

"So much so, my dear, that even after my conversion I have stopped in the street and read the play-bills."

I was silent, but tears came to my eyes as he repeated, "even after my conversion!"

I walked home in the perfect May evening, and the joy of things penetrated me again. I had lately often felt anger against the religion which had stinted him in beauty and knowledge and given him such a pitiful handful of joys. But now my anger gave way to wonder at the intensity of his love for the pageant of life, and the strength of the spirit which had chosen to give it up and had maintained his choice.

CHAPTER III

A DRESSMAKER

MISS MONKWELL worked as a dressmaker for my mother during thirty years. She must have made innumerable little garments for the family, boys and girls; and, indeed, the girls were dressed almost entirely by her until they grew up and went away from home. Her real name was Sarah Rodney Monkwell, but the first of my mother's babies had called her "Monkey". She liked this, as she liked everything that that baby did, and so the name stuck.

All her life Monkey looked a young woman. She was very slight, there was just enough red in her hair to give it warmth, and a touch of the same colour repeated in her eyes made them glow when she was moved. Her hands were thin and bony, but well kept, though the first finger of the left hand was roughened by her needle. Her complexion was beautiful. When we, as little children, admired her pretty colouring, she told us, not without pride, that the doctor thought she would probably go into a decline, and that that accounted for her bright colour. If this made us look sad—for we knew what happened to young women who went into declines from our Sunday story-books—Monkey added, with such genuine amusement, that she had cheated doctors before now and thought she would do it again, that we were comforted.

Monkey always worked for us on two fixed days in each week. In early spring and in autumn, to prepare us for the change of seasons, she spent weeks at a time in our house. When I look back at my ideas and opinions up to the age of ten, and it may be to those of a much later age, I find it impossible to say how many of them I owed to Monkey. The youngest children in a large family do not hear very much conversation; and Monkey, although she had many reticences and delicacies, treated us differently, more as if we were grown-up, than other people that I knew. Still, I should have lost a great deal of what I learnt from Monkey if we had not had among our series of nurses one with whom she was really friendly. I suspect now that none of the other nurses came up to her standard of loyalty and devotion to the family; for it was only during Eliza's reign that the nurse was made welcome in the work-room; and as she and Monkey sat and sewed together, they talked.

I followed for some weeks with breathless interest a quarrel that was going on between Monkey and the other tenant in her little house. The dispute arose from the question whose turn it was to clean what Monkey called "the run". The interest of the story was so great that I forgot to ask what the run was. Some years later it occurred to me to ask, and Monkey explained that it was the landing and stairs from the top of the house to the front door. Monkey had a very great power of repartee, and when she quoted what she had said to the tenant

I always thought her unanswerable; and so, apparently in the end, did her opponent, for Monkey won, and it was thenceforward impressed on my mind that if you make a contract about a run you must keep it.

I first learnt up in the work-room that there were social distinctions in the world, and even people who thought that their position was better than that of my family. This idea did not trouble me at all, because of Monkey's strongly held opinion of its absurdity.

On dress, where she was an expert, Monkey had not a great deal to say. She knew what she liked for us; good merino for the children in winter, and good muslin in summer; and for my mother fine cashmere on weekdays, silk on Sundays, and a moire antique on state occasions. Though she did not like too many frills and furbelows or "fal-de-lals", yet her feelings did not run away with her, and I have often heard her say that one ought not to judge people by their clothes. I am not sure that she did not in her heart of hearts judge them a little by their underclothes, for when she expressed her affectionate admiration for my mother, she always referred to the dainty nature of our many little petticoats. Monkey's steady good sense always inclined her taste towards the mean, rather than the extreme in dress. I remember her speaking of the bustles, that were just coming into fashion, as deformities, and yet, a little later, she pleaded almost tearfully with one of my older sisters to let her put "just

a wee one" in a new dress, so that she might not be called peculiar.

Her judgments—and I heard very many of them —were charitable, especially in any case of the poor and the oppressed. What she disliked were "airs". But she never spoke with finality of any human being. Even when she criticized most severely, she used to add: "But Time will make mention".

Monkey's religious views were those of my parents. She paid for a sitting in the same chapel. She accepted all she was taught, but she allowed herself great freedom in the line she drew between the sheep and the goats. She was quite sure that God liked honest doubters much better than hypocrites and Sunday saints, and to do any act of personal kindness to one of us or to herself was, in Monkey's eyes, to put yourself among the elect.

Once, when I was ten, Monkey told me that she had found the doctrine of eternal punishment a stumbling-block. I felt proud, for no one had ever spoken to me of a doctrinal trouble before. Last Sunday she had heard a minister preach who was inclined to the view that God did not persist in his vengeance for ever. I myself was rather disappointed that I could not share the relief that this hope brought to her mind. But a thousand years, which was the time she mentioned as probable before forgiveness would be given, seemed to a little girl of ten a very long time for anyone to burn.

Monkey's sister Grace was lady's-maid to a lady who was an Honourable and lived in the North of

England. From Grace Monkwell came rumours of a world quite different from our own. Once Monkey told Eliza that, from what she heard, "up the country, marriage was not what it used to be". I longed to know what it was now, and what it had been; but when I saw the real shock which this opinion of Monkey's gave to Eliza, I dared ask no questions: and for some years, if people came from North of the Thames, I felt that there was likely to be something unstable about their married life.

On the general events of her time Monkey was not well informed, and through her conversation a fear of the French was always with me. From our work-room you could see our great harbour, and I knew how little water there was between ourselves and France. My father had taken me over an immense fort built to resist a French attack. I found that my private opinion that the fort was entirely inadequate was shared by Monkey; and her whole view of the French character was not of a kind to calm my fears. Her father as a boy had been scared of Boney, and Monkey thought that the present man was not much better. After this, every time the familiar guns and salutes were fired, I was afraid that the French had come, and watched the faces of my elders eagerly, thinking that I could detect whether they were really anxious and only talking cheerfully in order not to frighten a little girl.

The Pope had been only a vague kind of bogeyman to me, until Monkey brought news from "up the country" to Eliza as to the growing power in

England of the Roman Catholic Church. Monkey and Eliza talked mysteriously to each other of priests and papists and converts. Sad as it was to discover that my countrymen were going one by one over to Rome, I might still have slept as soundly as usual if I had not heard Monkey say that in the gay society where these things were actually happening our own Prince of Wales moved.

She bent towards Eliza and said it would never surprise her if—then she stopped, and spoke a few words in so low a voice that I could not catch them. The next words that I caught were "Bloody Mary". It was painfully clear to me what Monkey meant. Our Prince of Wales, perverted by this gay society, was "going over" to Rome. When he came to the throne there would be another reign like that of Bloody Mary, as described in *Little Arthur's History*. I knew the very words of the most telling sentence; "She ordered the heads of more gentlemen to be cut off than I can tell you, and stuck up the heads on poles in the streets".

I was sure that my family, staunch in their convictions, would be among the first to suffer. I never imagined the possibility of a backslider among us. It was very dreadful, and that night I prayed that our dear Queen might be spared for a long time. Then, frightened as I was, I began to compose the little speech which I imagined it would be my last sad privilege to address to an admiring crowd. The act of composition was soothing, and I fell asleep.

Though I often used to be afraid that the cheerful-

ness which I observed in other grown-up people was assumed, I never felt any doubt about Monkey's cheerfulness. In her presence, next morning, all that was left of my dreadful new fear was a strange feeling of personal responsibility for the conduct of the Prince of Wales. I composed a poem indeed, and addressed it to the Prince. I only remember that the first line ran:

Should he who England's Throne—

and that I was quite satisfied with this and the whole poem. But I could not make up my mind so far to confide in anyone as to ask advice on the right way to forward it to the Prince.

Monkey's even and cheerful kindness made the work-room, throughout my childhood, a place of peace to me. I often found the downstairs world of drawing-room and dining-room bewildering and tiring: perhaps I was confused to tears by kind remarks from old friends of my parents on the colour of my eyes and hair, or my skies grew suddenly dark because something I had thought good was declared to be naughty. It was then that I could go up to the work-room, and sew a little and interrupt Monkey a good deal and breathe freely. Monkey restored my self-respect. She had no responsibility for my morals or manners, and she thought no child of my mother's could do wrong. She never asked questions, even if one came to her with a suspicious redness about the eyes. She would always stop what she was doing to cut out a dress for my

doll and put me in the way of making it; then she would at any time tell me over again the back parts of a long story, which she had read at home, and which she told us at our nursery tea. She had some firmness, too, for, however much I begged her just to let me know a little bit of what was coming next time, she was too loyal to the others to consent. Happily, I was never tired of hearing the part about Cracky Sally. As far as I can remember, this Sally was a pleasant character, whose mental peculiarity only showed itself in a habit of wearing three bonnets at once.

I never heard Monkey say "I told you so". Even if I engaged gaily to make so elaborate a garment for my doll Anita, that I was soon tired of it, she would smilingly pick up my work and say that I always would have the best of everything for Anita. If my sister Helen cut out with a bold hand a charming dress for her Patricia, copied from a fashion plate, and put it together with what Monkey called cat-stitches, she would say that, for her part, she liked dash, and that Miss Helen had never been the kind of young lady you could follow with an inch measure. In some things we must have disappointed Monkey. I remember so well her dismay, when the younger girls at one time demanded from her pre-Raphaelite garments, in deep blues and dull reds. Monkey reasoned for a while, looking almost tearful, and then laughed and yielded, saying that after all it was just as well that we looked nice in almost anything.

She didn't like to think what figures some young ladies she knew would be in such dresses.

In the many hours which we spent with Monkey, it is strange how seldom she spoke of her own hopes or ambitions. She told us about her cousin's farm, where she had been one June, and that if it had been consistent with working for us, she would have thought it lovely to spend her life there. If she had been rich, she would have liked, she said once, to have married a doctor, and to have had twins and a black nurse to take them out for her.

But when I look back, I know that we had too large a share in all her thoughts and hopes. Even at the end when, gallant as she was, she could cheat the doctors no longer, it was her chief interest and comfort to hear news of our scattered lives.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY NURSERY

WHEN we were children we thought it almost a sign of mental weakness to talk about the weather, or to be afraid of a wetting; but just at the end of the Easter holidays, when Alice was five and I was eight, there was a spell of wet that I shall always remember. It began with a clear, high grey sky, a light east wind, and a persistent rain that was at first quite inspiriting.

On the first rainy day we took a long rambling walk (leaving Alice at home), pitying people who only saw the country in sunshine. We came home thoroughly saturated, cheerful, and a little proud of the mud on our boots, to be warmed by the nursery fire and by Monkey's compliments on the effect of the rain on our complexions.

But the next day the monotony of the steady downpour was varied by heavy showers and sudden gusts of wind, and our elders interfered with our plans and said that a constitutional on the road would be the best thing for us. Naturally we cut this as short as possible, and it was not a success. Everything turned now on what would happen indoors and the spirit in which we received each other's ideas. Unfortunately when Alice announced that she was going to be a mother rabbit, and that we were all to be baby rabbits, I said crossly that I had been a white hen and a seal, and that I wasn't going to be

a rabbit; and as for expecting big boys like Ralph and Anthony to be baby rabbits, it was ridiculous. Generally we trusted to our tact to lead Alice away from her childish plays, but now that I had set the tone, whatever else she suggested, we all said, "Don't be silly".

I went to play alone with the doll's house, as I often did now. When it first came, Helen and I and even the boys had played with it all together, and we had had lords and ladies, dukes and pirates and burglars, fires and elopements in quick succession. Because of the rapidity with which things happened and the dread of boredom, that even the dolls seemed to share with Helen, there had been little or no connecting thread in the series of disasters. Accidents were so constant that soon one wicked duke was all that was left of the original dolls.

I had been thrilled and excited, but not satisfied, for I never dared to tell the others that what I really liked was continuity and the domestic virtues. So lately I had been building up a happy family life for a doll-family called Homerton. I had given them summer and winter clothes, weekday and Sunday clothes; the children had lessons; the mother and father a daily paper, and there were a few illustrated books on the drawing-room table. To prevent their virtues from growing wearisome, I decided that the eldest son just for a time should be a little wild and something of a spendthrift. He not only hid from his mother that he owed money for the little purple waistcoat that he wore, but the daring fellow drove

tandem on the nursery table, with a small tin horse in the shafts and a real skin horse as leader. The team got entangled. Norman Homerton fell, and broke his arm.

While he was recovering, Mrs. Homerton, who had refrained from all reproaches, listened to his confession. He kept nothing back, not even the affair of the purple waistcoat. Norman was so touched by his mother's forgiveness, that, when he was able to get up, he joined the navy. I made his sailor suit, and he had now been in a little boat on the window-sill, defending us from the French, for more than a week. I had prepared a joyful surprise for Mrs. Homerton, a little inch-long yellow telegram, telling her that he had been made an admiral. But I was not safe from intrusion. Ralph and Anthony were too near; I put off my real play and contented myself by making Mrs. Homerton undress her youngest child Laura, a half-penny china doll with fair hair. When this was done, Mrs. Homerton sat on the drawing-room sofa and read " The History of a Good China Doll."

The morning passed sadly. Even when Alice and I settled down to play with our big dolls, we answered the satirical remarks of the boys by very snappy ones of our own. After dinner, when the rain was worse instead of better, a little hope dawned. Helen was sent as a kind of ambassador from the boys. She came with an invitation to Alice and me and our dolls from Ralph and Anthony to a little party. Helen said that the boys thought it wouldn't

be bad fun to do a bit of cooking, because the experience would be useful on the desert island where they hoped soon to be thrown. Alice and I, not liking to show how delighted we were, murmured something about Tommy cutting his teeth and the night air for Miranda after measles; but Helen knew that nothing on earth would prevent us from coming, and went back contented.

At first it seemed a beautiful little party; it was as if a wonderful change had come over Ralph and Anthony. No mother could have shown more interest in Miranda's first tooth than Anthony, and Ralph's care for Tommy's education touched Alice very much. He couldn't begin Greek too soon, he said, and he hoped Alice would put him early into knickerbockers; his costume was all right now, for babies had to be bundles, else there was nothing to catch hold of. We waited quite politely for the feast, holding on, with the spare hand the dolls left free, to our borrowed bonnets. First there was a little jug of lemonade. Then a dish came in with five blackened lumps of pastry on it. Helen, who had heard Eleanor's account of a cooking demonstration, waved her hand and said: "These are Cornish pasties, as eaten by the world-famed Cornish miners!" The pasties looked as if a hard life in the mines would be the best preparation for them, and I thought anxiously of my Miranda and Alice's Tommy. But nothing could have been better than Anthony's manner when he said: "This is not food for infants", and produced a sponge finger cut in small bits. We were enchanted.

Not even when we were trying to break our way through the unbelievably hard pastry, did we suspect that anything was wrong, until inside each pasty we found one of our own small china dolls.

It was enough to annoy little girls if they had been saints; Alice and I gazed speechless with anger at our hosts.

They were three against two; and, trying to hide their smiles, they were saying to each other: "How very unfortunate. What can cook have been thinking of!"

Alice had never, since she learnt to speak, spoken without effect.

"You wicked boys," she began. "I'll cut you up into little bits with a fruit knife and give you to the canaries."

Then when she paused for breath, I forgot all the Christian teaching I had had in my short life (and it had been a great deal) and found my tongue.

"Prisons is too good for you," I gasped; and hurried on, with an uncomfortable sense that if I paused Helen would correct my grammar, to call them all a string of names, names I ought never to have heard.

In imaginary scenes I have always shamed the boys with quiet sarcasm; but now, as too often before, I was raging at them, so angry that I did not notice at first that they had fled from the storm which they had roused. Then we let Helen, although she was a guilty party, soothe us down a little. Alice's tear-stained face quickly became all smiles, and she

actually went through again to Helen all Ralph had said about Tommy, his Greek, and his future.

I went back to the doll's house to play, and then found that one of the blackened figures in the pasty must have been little Laura, taken from her bed while her mother, unconscious of harm, was reading downstairs. In my first fit of temper I had thrown my little pasty into the fire. What news was this for Laura's mother? She could not even have the consolation of a funeral: she would question me, and the whole affair would come out. The doll's house play that I had, for weeks, been making as real as life, was spoilt. The telegram in my pocket would never be delivered.

I shut the doll's house up and went in my misery to sit by the school-room fire alone. There was nothing in the world to do. It was only half-past three, and the day had in it, even for children, another solid five hours. I took a volume of *Good Words* from the shelves. I had read it before, sermons and all. They hadn't interested me, but one must do something. Now I read again, on and on until slowly my desire for companionship got the better of my temper. I had been taught to think it was a serious thing to feel angry on a winter afternoon when the sun might go down on your wrath. So I stole back to the nursery, trusting that the tact of the party there would prevent them from showing that they had noticed my absence. When I opened the door, to my surprise and joy Alec was sitting by the fire holding out very wet and muddy boots to the flames.

Alec was not often in the nursery nowadays, and for a time I was quite content to sit on the sofa and watch the steam rise from his boots and disappear up the chimney, while the mud caked and dropped in bits into the grate. Still, in spite of Alec's being there, the afternoon did not look promising. I was afraid that any minute he might go. But when his boots began to burn, instead of going he got up and began to look through the stamp collection which he still kept on one of the shelves with his fret-saw and other treasures. He stayed on, interested in what he was doing, and apparently indifferent to the noise.

The noise was awful. I wanted to read, and so did Anthony, but Alice, who was a Dartmoor pony, kept butting into us and neighing, and Helen, who, seated very insecurely on the piano, was writing a parody of "The boy sat on the burning deck", beat her fingers on the wood so that at each beat the chandelier shook, and said aloud, with exaggerated emphasis on the long syllables, "Thĕ bōy | stŏŏd ōn | thĕ būrn | ĭng dēck".

I was beginning to absorb myself in spite of all this, when Ralph, whose powers of concentration had been lately praised by his schoolmaster, and, what had impressed us more, by my father, set himself to try and learn the tune of "God save the Queen" on a flute. I think it was just because his ear for music had been condemned as hopeless, that he was so bent on the accomplishment of his end. He never got beyond the notes that accompany

"God save our Gra——", and, although his efforts must have lasted a quarter of an hour, there were never more than two out of the four notes right in one performance. Gentle suggestions that we had had enough music, Alec's asking him what hall he was going to take when he came before the public, only made him smile and persist. I could not understand why the others were so calm under this. After a bit I had a feeling in my spine as if I should scream, and I could hear a rumble of bad little words from Anthony, reading face down, on the floor. But before it had grown unbearable, Helen, who had finished her iambics, got down, and looking over Alec's shoulder asked him intelligent questions about his stamps.

There were now only two of the worst kinds of noise, and I read for a bit. When I looked up next, Helen and Alec were whispering mysteriously; Anthony had left his book and was standing, trying to catch what they said. There were even intervals in Ralph's music when he listened too. Alice stood quiet as a mouse.

In a few minutes more, as if by magic, we had begun to play a game all together that lasted two hours. There was a kind of plot, but that developed from within as the game went on. Every now and then Alec or Anthony, with a cat-like tread and a strange whispering voice, put us right as to who we were. That was all that was needed, as we moved through adventure after adventure, to a perfect climax. There were no orders to dress up, but we did

not hesitate to take the hearthrug, or the table-cloth off the table if we wanted to. The game included rowing on the carpet in chairs turned on their backs, and fishing from the sofa and the book-case. Two of the party were rescued from drowning; three of us had eaten acid drops standing on the music stool which was then a desert island. I was a beautiful princess who lived with a virtuous fisher-man. I never forget the thrill of horror that passed through me when I was innocently picking cockles on the beach, and looking up, I saw, standing on the nursery table, a figure entirely wrapped in the table-cloth. One hand only protruded, and that hand snapped the largest and best pair of nursery scissors at me in a threatening way.

It was Ralph, a wicked pirate. He took me prisoner, and I had to stay twenty minutes on the bookcase, quite quiet, for fear I should rouse Anthony, who was a deathly dragon, with a good deal of green lamp paper about him, at the foot of the tower. It was very long to be inactive, and I had only my imaginary beauty to console me. It was a great relief when Alec slew Anthony, who died with a groan, and I was told that I shouldn't be wanted as a princess again until the end, so that I might be a flat-fish and must lie on a dish on the piano until the virtuous cottager ate me for supper.

I settled myself on the piano, and was for a long time as quiet and flat as they could wish. At last Alec passed and whispered that there was something that would be found inside me when I was eaten

(they had not quite decided what) that was the clue to the whole thing. After that I couldn't be dull.

At first I had rather wished that I might have been something hideous or gallant or ferocious like the others, but I was young, and had fair hair, and I knew that I was best suited to be a princess or a flat-fish, and the story was such a wonderful whole that I was more than content to be in it. The end was splendid. Slaying the dragon had not released the princess, because the wicked pirate, as a precaution in case the dragon was killed, had locked the tower with a magic key and then thrown the key into the lake. This key could only be found by an old lady of ninety who had never told a lie. Most fortunately the day I was eaten was the ninetieth birthday of the good fisherman's wife. Alice was the wife, and she had put a ham-frill around her head to give an idea of her great age. After I was eaten Alec whispered to me that I should quietly hurry back to the tower, be the princess again, and be rescued.

The whole thing was like a beautiful dream, without the pain of the sudden incoherences, and without the curious loneliness of the most perfect dream. When it was over, none of us could believe that it was tea-time. We crowded around Alec, begging with one voice, that we might play this game again to-morrow.

But as we played, a north-west wind had sprung up, and Anthony, who had climbed, while we were talking, to the sill of a high window, called to us:

"Look! Look!" The clouds that had been so low, so heavy, and so uniform, were being chased by the wind and were changing from heaped up masses to flying ribbons, while great windows of blue opened in the sky. Part of our little inland garden was flooded. Some sea-gulls, looking at one moment as if the wind was driving them like leaves, and then as if they were flying, of set purpose, against the strongest gusts, were reflected in the pools.

We threw the window up. The air blew on our flushed faces, and the strange beauty outside made us forget that we wanted Alec to promise the impossible and play the same game to-morrow.

CHAPTER V

MY FIRST SCHOOL

THE Misses Locke, to whose school I went when I was seven years old, had during their father's lifetime been supported by him. When he died they were both past middle-age, and the smallness of their means came to them as a complete surprise. Being ladies of spirit, they decided at once to open a school.

The equipment of their school involved the Misses Locke in very little outlay either of trouble or money. I think that they bought nothing except two forms for the younger children, a piece of oil-cloth, bound at home and laid on the dining-room table, and half a dozen glass inkpots which their pupils used in turn. There were no maps, no diagrams, and the only thing on which dust ever settled at the Misses Locke's was the small terrestrial globe that stood wrapped in an oil-cloth cover on the top of the bookcase. The reading books had been used by the Misses Locke themselves at school. There was only one copy of each, which was handed round the class. One small room at Wisteria Lodge, which had been the breakfast-room, was now called the schoolroom, and here on the two forms sat, from nine to twelve-thirty every morning, the little boys and girls who were taught by the younger sister, Miss Sylvia Locke.

The Misses Locke knew as much of the theory of

education as of the theory of flying, but they practised co-education, with its obvious economic advantages, for as long as the parents of the little boys found it convenient. The sixteen older girls sat round the oil-cloth-covered dining-room table under Miss Locke. The drawing-room was sacred to the Misses Locke and their one parlour-boarder, except on Sundays, when all the boarders sat there; and it was the privilege of being in this room that gave charm to the parties to which the day scholars were invited twice a year. There was a good garden around the house, but I never saw "the young ladies" in it, and only once Miss Locke. I had come too early on a damp May morning, and found her there in pattens, talking with the gardener, and trying to check his enthusiasm in the matter of bedding-out plants. The boarders, after we had gone home at twelve-thirty, took half an hour's walk on really fine days. In uncertain weather (and the Misses Locke did not take a cheerful view of our climate) they did fancy work. Where they went when dinner was being laid I never knew.

My first days at school were spent in the schoolroom, with Miss Silvery Locks, as my brothers, with an audacity that left me dumb, called the younger sister. I do not remember much of my lessons with Miss Sylvia, but I can recall that she was thought to manage "little gentlemen" very nicely; and that she did it by using notes in her voice from which I had a passionate longing to fly. I remember only too vividly my needlework. I was to make a chemise

for Alice, who was then three years old. I was given a task at each lesson on a tiny fine hem. The task took an hour, and if Miss Sylvia had made a calculation of the number of lessons I had, and measured all the little hems and tucks, she would have realized that I could not have finished the chemise for some years. Meanwhile, my little sister, who was a healthy child, was growing under my eyes. No wonder that the sight of the little blackening stitches at varied angles to the hem filled my spirit with despair. I sewed on, in dumb obedience, until one day one of the boys asked me laughingly, when I thought that little "shirt" would be finished. He meant no harm, but I felt insulted, and weeks of pent-up feelings were let loose. I wept passionately, and could not be comforted. The little boy, who was exempt from such tasks, was astonished at the storm that he had raised. The next day he brought me a three-cornered piece of cocoanut as a peace-offering, and after that I had a friend on the form where I sat.

Soon after this my mother asked me whether I was happy at school, and I said yes. I was seven, and no one had ever defined happiness to me. If it was inconsistent with that state to have at times a feeling of uncertainty as to what would happen to you next, to endure feelings of shyness that produced unmeaning tears, and at the same time to have forgotten your pocket-handkerchief, I did not know it. For such feelings came to me sometimes even at home, and there were very often days when

I sat mildly interested in the other children, and was called, to my delight, "a good child" by Miss Sylvia. Perhaps my mother realized that all was not well, for I know that she went to see Miss Locke.

Happily for me, at this school we could not be carefully graded by age and acquirements, and so, when my mother, who, I am sure, was not meaning to boast, told Miss Locke that I had read *Little Arthur's History of England* more than once at home, and that I was familiar with the first four rules of arithmetic, I was taken away from the schoolroom and promoted to sit by the side of Miss Locke with the young ladies in the dining-room.

There is no doubt that if I had been happy before, I was much happier now. Miss Locke was the very spirit of kindness, and she always brought to her place at the table with her little pile of books, a brown boat-shaped key-basket, like that which my mother used. This I found home-like and comforting. My horizon was widened too by being taught writing and arithmetic by Mr. Lee, our one visiting master, a tall, thin man of sixty who wore a long alpaca coat. There was no reason why these subjects should not have been taught by Miss Locke, whose handwriting was irreproachable, and no strain would have been put on her knowledge of arithmetic, for the rules in the book that we used were perfectly clear; the sums were set, and the answers placed in order at the end. It was taken for granted by Mr. Lee that when a girl multiplied, added, subtracted, or divided, she knew what she was doing.

But Miss Locke would have thought it unfeminine for a lady to teach arithmetic, except as Miss Sylvia did to very young children; and, besides, Mr. Lee's weekly visit enabled her to leave us for the last two hours every Saturday morning and go to market.

At the end of my first quarter I was invited to the breaking-up party. I was dressed in stiff white muslin, and my hair had been plaited in small tight braids the night before, so that it stood like a bush around my head. It was a lovely summer day, and we sat the greater part of the time round the wall of the drawing-room, with the windows tight shut. I was blissfully happy. Now I could see the album of the Misses Locke, of which the boarders had so often spoken. I even had it to myself uninterrupted for some time, and I realized that Miss Locke and Miss Sylvia had once been young. Among the extracts from the poets and the rarer prose gems were some acrostics and original verses. One was addressed to "Sylvia, on receiving a bookmarker worked in her hair". I read this again and again. I tried, as Miss Locke would have put it, "to commit it to memory", and the fact that something curious in the style and metre made this an impossibility, only added to my admiration for the poem.

I had been sitting a long time with the album when my dear Miss Locke came up to me, and said in the kindest voice that I was a little mouse. Then she took me to a side table and actually removed the glass shade that covered a doll dressed in five or six kinds of the smaller British shells.

The main dress was of cowries, the apron of wee and delicately graduated pink fan-shells, finished with tiny ribbon bows. I was near enough to see the doll's little rosy cheeks, the parting of the real hair, and how the artist who made her had caught the calm expression of the good women of his day. This beautiful creature, I was told, had been dressed by Miss Locke's mother. She, herself, remembered her mother collecting the shells in a Cornish cove, while she and Miss Sylvia gambolled on the sands.

I was almost overwhelmed with attention when after this Miss Sylvia let me stand on a chair and look at some wonderful pressed sweet-peas which hung framed on the wall. She told me that they had been pressed by her great-aunt, and that the secret of preserving the colours had died with her. I was proud of this confidential conversation with Miss Sylvia, who wore brown silk and a large cameo brooch, and I felt a profound respect for the stern, unyielding nature of the reticent great-aunt.

But it was not only being taken back to the early life of the Misses Locke that made the joy of this party. There was of course music, and when Miss Sylvia sang "O fair Dove, O fond Dove", and the parlour-boarder played a piece in which she constantly crossed her long hands, I felt that music could do no more for me. After this Miss Sylvia retired for a few minutes, and when she returned carrying a large object, she said:

"I have something of an innovation to-day, my dears, a Zoetrope or Wheel of Life."

We crowded around her and looked through the slits of the whirling tin cylinder. I wonder to this day how it was that the gay vulgarity of some of the slips was allowed to pass, and that Miss Locke and Miss Sylvia showed such simple delight at the donkey repeatedly kicking the old gentleman over his head and the clowns playing leap-frog.

Not only could I now look forward to a party like this twice a year, but life had other new interests. There was the parlour-boarder. She had been an ordinary boarder, and then changed into this marvellous thing almost before our eyes. She had put her hair up. The process had changed her almost beyond recognition. Miss Bell, as even Miss Locke called her from the day of the change, appeared every morning at breakfast with a beautifully smooth chignon, and above it three rolls of hair, stuffed with what we called pads and Miss Locke "frisettes", and from underneath there hung a single ringlet. I remember that Miss Locke said this looked "so careless"; but the whole erection was stable enough to have stood firm in a much wilder life than any that Miss Bell could hope for while she was at school at Miss Locke's.

Although I saw the parlour boarder every day, I never spoke to her. I hardly even spoke of her; she seemed so remote from any world in which I should ever move. But one day before Christmas, when I was collecting and putting away the ink-bottles for Miss Locke, Miss Bell came in and sat at the table. She leant her chin on her hands and

watched me. I could hardly believe it was true when she called me to her and said that she was often lonely even in a crowd. She had thought that I was like her. Was I lonely too?

How I wished that I could say yes! But I had been strictly brought up, and gracelessly I stuttered "No", feeling that I had forfeited all claim to this unexpected condescension. To my great relief, Miss Bell hardly seemed to notice my answer, and went on talking to me. At last it was clear that I was being confided in; the honour was so great that I stood spellbound, while she took from her pocket a piece of paper and read me a few lines.

"They tell us we're too young to love", the poem began.

"How", I thought, "could anyone say such a thing! To be a parlour boarder and have hair like that, and then to be told that you were too young to love!"

"Too wild to be united", she read on.

"Wild!" Why, the very way that Miss Bell carried a teacup to her lips was an example to us all of gentle restraint!

There was so much feeling in her voice that I feared she would break down as she read the next two lines:

> In vain they bid us both renounce
> The fond vows we have plighted.

At last my pent-up sympathy found expression. I stood up.

"But you *never*, NEVER would!" I exclaimed.

"No", she said, in a tone that thrilled me. "NEVER, but we are watched. Could you, do you think?" She drew from her pocket a small pink note. "Could you——" And I, although timid to morbidity, flushed and eager, held out my hand for the note, when the door opened and Miss Locke came in.

The note disappeared with swiftness into Miss Bell's pocket.

"My dear", said Miss Locke to me, "go now, or you will be late at home. Good little girl, you have arranged the ink-bottles very neatly."

I had to go. There were only a few days before the end of the quarter, and I was never alone with Miss Bell again, but her eyes followed me reproachfully, and I thought of my loved Miss Locke as a cruel tyrant. I dreamt of helping an elopement, perhaps in the last omnibus that went into town at 9.30 p.m., and I wondered why among the schoolboys at the school next door to ours I could not see one whose princely bearing singled him out for me as the object of Miss Bell's affection.

In the holidays the memory of this romance grew dim, and what the later history of Miss Bell's heart was I do not know.

But if the parties and this thrilling confidence stand out most clearly in my memories of Miss Locke, I do not forget the long hours devoted to education. There was an immense amount of learning by rote. The multiplication table, the

counties of England, and the books of the Bible were constantly repeated by us all. There were hours spent working unexplained sums in very neat figures, which I ought to be ashamed to say how much I enjoyed. This taste of mine warmed the heart of Mr. Lee to me, but it made Miss Locke a little anxious, because, as she said to him one day in my hearing, she was not sure that it was not an excessive love of figures that had led dear Bishop Colenso astray.

Miss Locke twice a week read us aloud Mrs. Markham's *History of England*. I liked Miss Locke's voice, and I always looked forward to the dramatic interest at the end of the chapter when foolish little Ada's remarks were commented on by her preceptress.

We learnt, to my joy, a great deal of poetry good and bad. *Old Caspar*, *On Linden when the sun was low*, *Tell me not in mournful numbers*, *Oh that those lips had language*, and (I could never tell why), *My earrings*, *my earrings*, *they've fallen into the well*. But unfortunately there was also geography. The book was arranged in lumps of large print and lumps of small, on what plan I never knew; but the small print lumps were worse than the large. I remember being in real trouble one morning when Miss Locke said to me that if I could commit poems to memory easily, a list of isthmuses ought to present no difficulty. I felt that this was unjust, but I struggled for a long time to learn them.

Before calling for the list to be repeated, Miss

Locke asked me to explain what an isthmus was. Everything seemed against me that day. When I was much smaller I had confused an isthmus with a certain extinct beast of which my father had spoken. Though I could smile now at this childish folly, my ideas on the subject of what an isthmus really was were so shadowy that I was confused and silent. I shall never forget Miss Locke's grieved expression as she explained the term to me, or the humiliating fact that I still could not remember the names in the order of the book.

But another day I had my small triumph. One morning Miss Locke, as she turned over the poetry book to find a suitable piece, said: "I wonder, my dear, if this is too difficult for you. Try it." It was a poem about a bird's nest. It began:

> Behold a bird's nest. Mark it well within, without,
> No tool had he that wrought, no bodkin to insert,
> And yet how neatly finished.

The very idea that the little bird would have been any better off with a gimlet and a bodkin would have riveted the lines to my mind for ever. But it was blank verse, and that was a form of writing of which Miss Locke always spoke with reverence. I was eight years old, and she had said in my presence that she considered blank verse beyond the powers of juveniles. I cannot forget her praise when I repeated the little poem. It could not wipe away the memory of the isthmus trouble, but it did much to soften it.

When I look back at the glimpses of a kindly

and refined life which the Misses Locke gave me, I hope at least that my manners and my handwriting gained good from their care, and I am thankful that they had retired before changes which would have bewildered them and destroyed their school had had their full effect. But I am glad that my parents took me away from the school when I was nine, in the hope that I might learn more from a governess. Other parents left their daughters to be "finished" by the Misses Locke, who had nothing more to give girls of sixteen or seventeen than they had given me at eight, unless it were a longer piece to learn from Mangnall's *Questions*, or stocks and shares instead of compound long division.

CHAPTER VI

A CONFESSION BOOK

ONE day, when I was eight years old, a rare thing happened—I found myself alone in the drawing-room with my mother.

The sunlight through the great south windows half-shaded by Madras muslin curtains made bright patches on the soft carpet. My mother let me stand on a chair and waggle the lustres of the gas brackets, that I might see the dear little coloured sunbeams dance on the walls and the ceiling. She was winding double Berlin wool, on a new whirligig machine, and had no need of my outstretched hands; so I asked if I might look at her Confession Book, and sitting on a small stool in the window I read it, not for the first time, through from beginning to end.

My mother's Confession Book was bound in soft black leather, with gold tooling. The smooth pages were delicately tinted blue, pink, lilac, and yellow. But more delightful than the binding and the paper were the twenty-two questions printed on each page, and the fact that almost all the friends who came to our house had written answers to them in their best handwriting. Through this book I learnt something about grown-up people and their tastes and opinions. Not only did I know that our minister's favourite colour was pink, and his favourite flower the lily-of-the-valley, but I knew what he thought on really serious subjects. Like many other of

the writers, he recorded that his "pet aversion" was a strong-minded female. When friends who had written their confessions came to see us, I felt that I already knew them well without the pain of the blushing, stammering intercourse that was often all that was open to me.

I learnt from the opinions in this book what to avoid and what to admire in fiction and in real life. I longed for the day to come when, with my hair up and my handwriting formed, I too should write my confession. I thought, but was not sure, that some of the writers had tried to be funny or original. I did not believe, for instance, that the man was in earnest who said that his favourite occupation was eating and his favourite flower the dandelion. But to write my confession would be a serious matter. I should record simply and truthfully, as most of the others had done, that my favourite quality in man was courage, in woman modesty, and my "pet aversion", too, would be a strong-minded woman; for where I had had no opinions before, the Confession Book had supplied me with them.

I turned the pages happily; counting how many times Garibaldi's name was written in the book. Of him my knowledge was first-hand, or I felt that it was. When I was four I had dashed after my brothers down our steep hill to see his train pass in the valley below, and throughout my life his name had been a bond of fellowship in the most unlikely quarters. Tiny child as I was, I thrilled

when our minister spoke of a man raised up by God to defy Anti-Christ. I was proud that I knew that the man was Garibaldi, and that the Pope was Anti-Christ. What a man God had given us in Garibaldi; Garibaldi, who chose his wife through a telescope, who wore such a picturesque costume that the natural unconverted boy shouted himself hoarse as he passed. It was no wonder, with our cook's hatred of papacy, with my father and grandfather's love of liberty, and my child's love of high resolves and fine clothes, that it was Garibaldi's name and no other that I intended to write in answer to the question, "your favourite hero in real life".

About Florence Nightingale, although I learnt from the Confession Book that she must be my favourite heroine in real life, I did not know very much. Of course every Victorian child had been told that she carried a lamp and smoothed the pillows of dying soldiers; but to-day I asked my mother suddenly to tell me all about her. She stopped her work, and said that to do this Florence Nightingale had left a luxurious home to become a nurse, and that the Queen herself had given her a brooch. I was delighted with this increase in my knowledge, and turned my mind to making a special study of the "pet aversions" of our friends. Many of the writers agreed with our minister, and put "a strong-minded female" opposite the question. This fact, and the answers to the question as to "your favourite quality in women" helped me to build up an image of my ideal woman. She must

be silent, for nearly all the men and some of the women liked silence in women. She must be very gentle and not at all strong-minded. This ideal was not very inspiriting, but it contented me. As I was going to put the book back on the table I noticed a name I had overlooked before—it was Lydia Becker.

"Who," I asked my mother, "is Lydia Becker?"

I think that she had fallen into some train of thought of her own, for she answered rather absently: "Oh, one of the Women's Rights ladies."

"But"—I began in genuine astonishment, for Lydia Becker was not a "pet aversion", but the "favourite heroine in real life" of a quiet elderly Quaker lady, whom my mother had known in her youth, and whom she called Grace Ellen.

"But, mother!" I exclaimed.

My mother was so absorbed in undoing a knot in her wool that she did not grasp the importance to me of this strange thing. She only said, "I think I'd run upstairs now, dear, it's nearly dinner-time". I went, a little disconcerted after a happy morning, for I could no longer give my mother's friend Grace Ellen, who was one of my favourites, my full approval. Strange as it was, she must be tainted with that unfeminine quality strong-mindedness.

When, very shortly after this, "Women's Rights" became one of the favourite topics of conversation, the practical unanimity of the writers in the Confession Book, and the fact that they agreed with Monkey in the work-room had given me my bias. I was ardently against Women's Rights. I agreed

with all those who said that the best way to treat such absurd ideas was to kill the movement by ridicule.

To a group of high-spirited children, members of a well-brought-up nonconformist family, this idea especially recommended itself. The things that it was thought suitable to make fun of were distinctly limited, and it was one of our many difficulties with our governesses that we had not learnt, as Miss Clatworthy afterwards expressed it, to distinguish suitable objects for a display of humour from those by their nature unsuitable. But now, when we introduced a strong-minded female in our charades we were applauded by everyone.

At table, in the work-room, in the nursery, we heard more and more of these strange ladies. I did not know, and never thought of asking, what it was they wanted. It was enough for me that their claims were described as preposterous; and everything I heard confirmed me in my belief that they were indeed my "pet aversion". Day by day, as we talked of and mimicked imaginary women of this type, two real ones, with the unforgettable names of Briggs and Brody, were coming geographically nearer and nearer to us. We heard that they were addressing meetings at Salisbury, and then at Exeter, and at last it was announced that in a few days they would be in our town.

Directly these ladies had arrived there was new life in our charades. The rather pantomimic figures of strong-minded women that had contented us

began to pall, and we listened eagerly for accounts of their dress and scraps of their speeches. Some of our friends, pleading natural curiosity and with an apology for appearing to encourage such absurdity, actually went to hear them speak, and from them we gathered interesting details. Briggs and Brody did not wear, as we had supposed, bowler hats, but bonnets such as other more modest women might have done. Any scandal in connection with their clothes was confined to the breadth of their shoes and to the fact that their skirts stopped an inch or two from the ground.

We acted a Women's Rights Meeting in the schoolroom, and thought Anthony looked very well as Briggs dressed in a bonnet of my mother's, an old waterproof from which we had cut alternate buttons, and my father's boots with the laces dropping on to the platform. Helen as Brody made her success by the voice she produced for the occasion. It would have quelled a much larger audience, when, holding on to her bonnet with both hands, she proclaimed:

"They say we can't fight—— But", she went on in a deep bass growl, "we can fight". And then when an uproar was threatened, she simply thundered, shaking her fists: "And we will fight."

All through our plays, Ralph had taken on himself to defend the rights of women. We put this down to his general cussedness, but we were glad that he undertook willingly a part that would have been distasteful to the rest of us.

As chairman, in introducing Helen and Anthony he struck an aggressive note. "They may not be very ornamental——" he began. This remark threatened to be his last, because of a burst of prolonged ironical cheers, but he managed by a deafening ringing of the dinner-bell and reference to an Englishman's right of free speech, to get a hearing for the end of his sentence.

"But", he said, "I would rather have them than silly pink-faced girls that scream at a mouse."

If his praise was mild his feelings were strong, and Ralph was at his best when we rushed the platform and he was hitting out right and left in their defence.

I was generally very happy while there was so much dramatic interest in our games. Only at times I wondered whether the subject was not, after all, too serious for jokes. Monkey first implanted a doubt. One day I was having a blue merino frock tried on when she told me that her sister, the ladies' maid "up the country", knew a great deal about Brody, who, in spite of her strange unfeminine conduct, came of a really good family, that visited with "the county". Indeed, she was a cousin of the Honourable Emily's brother-in-law. Monkey described this family's grief at Miss Brody's opinions, and their greater sorrow at her costume. Monkey, generally so direct in her language, must have been quoting her sister from "up the country" when she said that she understood that Miss Brody had even given up "the natural props" of the female figure.

I was saddened, particularly when she went on to describe such conduct as "a betrayal of her sex".

But it was Miss Clatworthy's elder sister who, when she came to tea, raised the discussion to the highest plane. Miss Clatworthy's elder sister often began her remarks, I thought charmingly, by saying: "I may be old-fashioned, but——" She began in this way one day, and then went on to explain the hitherto unexplained fact that women who might pass their lives under male protection, or, failing the existence of husbands or fathers, live in the retirement suitable to their condition, should, as she expressed it, choose to "stump the country".

I listened intently. In every generation, she said, certain people were born with one ruling passion: love of notoriety. In the ladies of whom she had been speaking, this love had been developed to such a point that even to be hooted at and insulted in the street became a pleasure. I had always been satisfied with what the elder Miss Clatworthy said, because she really did know so many things and her manner was so impressive, but the state of mind she described was so strange to me that when she added, addressing me personally, "They get, in that way, my dear, their chief object—notoriety", I did not think that she had made her point convincingly clear.

The next day it was raining hard, and we were painting old magazines in the nursery, when we heard the front-door bell ring. Helen went and leant over the top of the banisters to see what was happening. She came back gasping out:

"It's Brody! Grace Ellen has brought Brody!"

Although I knew that Grace Ellen was the one lady of our acquaintance who might be in league with these people, I did not believe what Helen said, for sometimes she had her own way of brightening a wet afternoon.

None of us deigned to notice the announcement except Anthony, who asked in his most sarcastic manner, if they had brought Queen Victoria and the Princess of Wales with them. Helen tossed her head, and went and watched at the window. But her patience gave way, and, perhaps, when the tea-bell rang, she too thought that the ladies were creatures of her imagination.

I flushed crimson and dared not meet Helen's triumphant glance, when, at tea-time, my mother said quietly:

"Who do you think has been calling on me? Grace Ellen brought one of the 'Women's Rights' ladies!"

So it was true! My mother went on to explain that Grace Ellen was one of the local committee, and that she had called with Miss Brody on the wives of all the leading Liberals to ask support for the final meeting. Eleanor laughingly extracted from my mother that she had given five shillings to the cause. Her excuse was that it was such a wet day for them to have come so far, that very few people had even admitted them, and that she did not think that they could do much harm with so small a sum. She told us that Miss Brody was a

lady, and that she respected her, for it must be so very hard to feel it a duty to make yourself peculiar.

I was puzzled and a little shocked at my mother's attitude. Could it be that she too had not quite understood what her own friend the elder Miss Clatworthy had tried to make so clear to me, the danger of a love of notoriety? Could I be any longer sure that my mother was quite at one with the majority of writers in her Confession Book on the question of their "pet aversion"?

CHAPTER VII

CONVERSION

WHEN I was a little girl I was converted: it happened at a Sunday evening service. The feeling was delightful. My attention, that so often wandered in sermon-time, was first attracted by the eloquence and the gestures of the strange minister, who had taken dinner with us in the middle of the day, just as any other human being might have done. "Only believe—only believe", he kept repeating, and there was something very moving in this reiterated appeal, although I did not quite understand why he thought it necessary to make it. It would have seemed to me impossibly rude and suspicious to have doubted anything that a Christian minister, and a man whom my father had asked to our house, said.

When, near the end of his sermon, the gas was turned on, and there was a haze of light between me and the pulpit, the preacher grew still more impressive, and I could not take my eyes from his face. It seemed that, little girl as I was, he was speaking to me personally. When he described the sacrifice of Christ, his long fingers pointed straight at me, as he said in earnest, low tones: "And this was done—for you—for you—for you."

Mine was not a heart of stone, but the heart of an ordinary impulsive child. The preacher went on to say that nearly two thousand years ago Jesus Christ

had known everything, however trivial, about me (even, I wondered, about my summer wide-brimmed Leghorn hat with forget-me-nots around it!) and to save me from eternal torment he had chosen to be crucified. All that he asked in return, was that I should love him. It was unthinkable not to love anyone who had done all this; the only strange thing was that the minister seemed so terribly anxious about it all, and that the glow of love I felt for the Christ who had saved me was what he called conversion. However, I was very happy, and I sang the closing hymn, "Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so", with a tuneless fervour that made Helen nudge me and say, "Go slow," under her breath. I did not understand her request, for I was half a note behind the others as it was.

I drove home in a silent rapture. Vaguely I knew that this change must mean other changes. I must never show temper, and I must perhaps give all my pocket-money to the poor. I felt more than equal to such trifling sacrifices, and I surprised our nurse by neatly folding all my little garments before I got into bed, a habit that she had tried vainly for a long time to teach me. After a few happy minutes on my knees, I lay comfortably in my bed, looking at the patches of white light which the moon threw on the carpet. I grew drowsy, asking myself the question which, as I had heard more than once from the pulpit, was the test of conversion: "Was I afraid to die?" I wasn't a bit. To go to sleep and wake in heaven, that was all. If anything could be pleasanter than

my bed, it would be heaven. So I was all right. My heart was Christ's, and I was suddenly in a dreamless sleep. When I woke, it was morning, not in heaven, but on earth.

As I dressed I imagined myself meeting the teasing of my brothers and the demands on my time of nurse and Helen and Alice with a Christ-like smile. I saw myself kind and very patient, but aloof—dedicated. I maintained this attitude through the difficulties of a long morning. But after the morning, events were against me. When Ralph came in from school he said, as he often did, "Where's mother?"

He was hiding one hand, and was so pale, that we all exclaimed: "Why, Ralph, what's up?"

"It's all right", he said quickly, and fainted.

Helpless and terribly anxious, we made way for my mother and Eleanor, and spent a miserable half-hour in the nursery, trying to make jokes to show our indifference. We saw the coachman ride off for the doctor, and the doctor's carriage at our front-door for what seemed to us hours before Eleanor ran up, said: "Don't be anxious, it isn't serious", and disappeared. The reaction from our fears made us as wild with curiosity as joy. At last the doctor drove away, and my mother came to us herself.

"Ralph has broken the little finger of his left hand", she said. "The doctor has set it." She was very grave when she added: "I am sorry to tell you, dears, that Ralph has been fighting—and in the street."

For a moment we were downcast; Ralph was not only suffering but he was in disgrace. Still, the very

fact that something had happened to break the monotony of our lives helped our spirits to rise. As the day went on, little bits of news collected by Robert and Alec from the gardener and other sympathetic onlookers cheered us very much. The street boy, who by all accounts was bigger than Ralph, had before tea reached six feet two inches and a half in height, and the provocation he was said to have given Ralph grew in proportion. I was still so far under the influence of my conversion as to wish that it had been in defence of someone small and weak that Ralph had attacked the bully; but I could not help a glow of family pride, because Ralph, who was far from strong, had hit out so effectively.

At tea we knew that even our elders shared this feeling. Eleanor actually said: "Ralph had some excuse, that boy is a big bully. . . ."

"And", said Alec, "Ralph got the best of it in spite of his finger. . . ."

Anthony alone dared express the thrill that went through us all.

"Hip! Hip! Hur. . . ." he began.

"Hush, hush", said my mother, and we were silent, for we were a Christian household; but I thought, though I may have been wrong, that Eleanor smiled at Anthony.

After tea I took my book and sat on the long stool in front of the drawing-room fire-place, which had lately been filled by Eleanor with great palm ferns. My mother and Eleanor were there, and did

not send me away to play as I feared they might. I loved the quiet of the grown-up world, and felt a wondering admiration for Eleanor, not only because she was the eldest and had her hair up, but because of her happy intimacy with my mother and the fact that she made the same kind of joke in the drawing-room as in the nursery. Not one of the others quite dared to do that. The very presence of a group of Parian nymphs standing on a round piece of glass and holding up a silver vase would have made me feel that a different manner was expected of me in this room; but if I was allowed to sit in the drawing-room with a book, and now and then catch bits of talk, the veil of shyness between my mother and me was lifted.

Eleanor was holding a skein of double Berlin wool as my mother wound it into a ball. She intended to knit a sofa blanket while she sat with Ralph, who declared now that his finger did not hurt in the very least. It was really, he said, rather more comfortable than usual.

Ralph's adventure had stirred up memories of his early childhood, and mother was telling Eleanor how, when he was between four and five, the doctor told her he had given up hope of saving his life.

"I shall never forget how good Grandmother Kentispeare was", my mother said. It was strange to me to hear the grandmother whose memory I feared spoken of in this way. As if answering my thought, as she unravelled a tangled strand of wool, she went on: "Some people said she was hard, dear.

I never found her so; her manner was rough, but she did sudden shy kindnesses more like a girl than an elderly woman. . . ."

Then she told Eleanor that the day the doctor had given Ralph up, grandmother came. When mother told her what the doctor had just said, she did not speak a word, but went straight upstairs to see Ralph; and this was what happened.

She stood by the bed and took the child's wasted hand.

"Would little Ralph like to go and be with Jesus?" she asked.

Ralph sat up in bed, with wonderful vigour for a dying child. "No—I shouldn't", he said.

When grandmother came down, she, who never gave false comfort, said to my mother: "Don't trouble, Agnes dear, about Ralph, he'll get better", and she had tears in her eyes.

That night my mind was full of many things, Ralph's fight, his pluck, grandmother's shrewdness, and my mother's affection for her. My idea of being a Christ-like child had vanished like a dream. The interest and variety of the world around me was so pleasant and so satisfying that I forgot that I was converted, with a forgetfulness so complete that it was some years before I was troubled with the thought of my backsliding.

When the idea of conversion took serious hold of me once more, I must have been fourteen. For a year or two at that time it was seldom long absent from my mind. Happily I could forget it for days

and sometimes for weeks at a time. It was not now an accomplished fact that gave me joy, as in that happy night in my early childhood; but it was something that hung over me, something that must happen, but the thought of which brought self-distrust into my present and fear into my future. I still had no doubts in my conscious life of the whole truth of the religion I had been taught. What made me ashamed was that I had not the courage to take my stand with the believers. What I dreaded was a life spent with the people of God; not in heaven, where I had reason to hope we should all be a bit transfigured, but here on our beautiful Devon earth. One by one, as I grew up, girls and boys whom I had known as children were converted; they were baptized and they became church members. After they had been through these mysterious experiences, do what I would, I could never feel the same to them again. I could never forget that things that were the breath of life to me took, or ought to have taken, a very secondary place in their lives. For me, there were long days on Dartmoor with my father and my brothers, when, lying in the heather, we could look in all directions and see no sign that men, converted or unconverted, existed; or reading (while I was perhaps making a very sketchy toilet for chapel, or sitting with Alec in his bedroom) poets, some of whom, like Shelley, were not approved of in the pulpit. How could I bear it, if conversion meant that in chapel I must never let my thoughts wander, and must give full attention and respect to

whatever vessel God chose for his truth, even if he were ignorant, conceited, and narrow? I should have to go to week-night services, while the others were acting charades, or were taking the moonlight walks that we loved. Robert had once shown me a poem of Coleridge's about worshipping God in the open. It was a beautiful dream; for me, worship meant heat and monotony, and rows of best hats and bonnets which I knew in every detail, and from which there would be no relief until the next change of season.

In the dear secular world which I should leave, we had estimates of people that even my father and mother seemed to share. We thought of our friends as courageous, as lovable, as witty, as full of good sense. Yet I knew that, as grandfather would have put it, many of these were not "formally identified" with our branch of the Christian religion. Such people inspirited and made us happy, and we were free to love them. But if, after all, the great division was the one that our minister made again and again with a wave of his hand—sheep and goats? Then I must be a sheep, and my chosen companions must be sheep.

And yet I often wanted intensely to be a Christian. It was not from fear of hell, for at home it had become understood that there were puzzles which might be left for solution to the goodness of God; and more than once I had heard it hinted that the doctrine which condemned the ancient heathen, and especially the children, to eternal torment for want of

faith in a religion which did not exist in their time, might be treated as such a puzzle. It seemed, too, in our chapel, to be taken for granted that the morning congregation of church members and people who had paid for their seats should be told chiefly of the joys of heaven and of the good life on earth. Little was said of hell, except in the evenings, when the free seats were full, and when, although we attended, we knew that we were not really addressed. These evening sermons made me very uncomfortable, like any other instance of bad taste which I understood. But, say what they would about hell, I could not see or fear the thing. A common prison seemed as likely for my dear and self-respecting friends. And, for those who might be caught, I had only the same kind of pity which I felt for a moth that buzzed itself into the candle-flame. But the appeal that had touched me so when I was seven sometimes stirred me deeply. I could not long forget the wonderful sacrifice of Christ and the haunting beauty of some of his words. Then, as now, I knew nothing which satisfied the uncalculating, unspoilt compassion of a child as did his welcome to the outcast and the wretched.

While I lived, troubled, and despising myself because I could not make what all the professing Christians called a small sacrifice (the giving up the joy of my youth), I was in constant fear of those people who make it their object to bring others to God. I had had my full share of pitiful fears as a child; but my former dread of darkness, of railway accidents, and of my grown-up life, where, if I

believed what I was told, appalling trials awaited me, had been as nothing to my present dread of being left alone with an elderly friend who had found peace. I thought I must be cold and unnatural, and I wondered whether the time would ever come when I could say with a whole heart, "Thy people shall be my people".

Once I was comforted for a little while, because I heard my mother say to Eleanor that she knew it was wrong, and she admired people who were different, but she could not get over her dislike of bearing testimony for Christ. But my mother's friends had either greater fervour or less delicacy than she had. And if one of them, by professing an interest in my little garden, took me aside and asked me if I loved Jesus, I gasped, "Yes". But I fled to hide myself in the house, hurt and troubled.

Once, at my mother's request, I took a young minister who was staying with us to see the roses. He spoke to me of the joy that his faith gave him, and asked with a note of deep concern if I shared his faith. This time, too, I quietly said, "Yes", but again the feeling that something was wrong was so strong that I hardly heard what he said, and was entirely unmoved by his pleading that I should join the church. All my thoughts were concentrated on keeping back the tears which he might mistake for religious emotion. It was not until Eleanor, at dinner-time, told me that he had been suddenly called back to what he described as "his sphere of usefulness", that I felt life was bearable again.

The most earnest attempt to enrol me as a youthful convert and church member was made by a dear old friend of my mother's. I was lying, one sunny day, by the wild pond in a far corner of the garden, with ten little red volumes of Tennyson. I dipped in here and there, and wondered that only a year ago I had been childish enough to admire Longfellow. Tea was at five; I had perhaps hours before me in which I should be alone. I did not hear the little side door that was used by intimates open; and I had not looked up until I found that Miss Stanford was standing over me. She said that she had seen "my recumbent figure in my shady retreat", and had come to join me for a few moments, as she knew that my mother was still resting. I made a dash at my untidy hair and murmured some politeness. She looked at my little books and expressed pleasure in what she called my studies. I hid my disappointment, but a kind of instinctive desire not to have certain associations with our wild pond made me lead Miss Stanford to a seat on the lawn. After I had answered detailed inquiries about us all, for she had known us as babies, I suggested that my mother's resting-time must be over. Miss Stanford thought not. And then, out it came—the same appeal that had always moved me so—Christ's life as an example and his sacrifice, which had left a debt to be paid by us all.

Could I hear this oft-told tale, she asked, and not love him?

I couldn't, and, trembling, I admitted it. There

was no joy in my voice, for something told me that I could not any longer put off the natural consequences of that admission, and that this was a decisive moment in my life. Miss Stanford did not conceal her delight, for she knew that she was making an impression, and she urged me to join the Church, and so lend my help to those who were holding the lamp of truth aloft in a dark world. I liked this picture of myself, and my whole training and my love of the square thing was making me feel that I was "in for it".

But Miss Stanford pressed me further about the state of my heart; and my unreasoned dislike of this process came back in full force. The words "If only she'd go——", "if only she'd go" passed, without my will, across my brain. She wanted to know how long I had loved Jesus. Then, when I could not give her dates, for I did not know, she asked how much I loved him. Again I could not tell her, but in her desire for certainty she helped me in a way that she had not intended. Did I love him, she asked, more than I loved my father and my mother, my sisters and my brothers? Should I be content to forsake them all for God?

I knew that I should not, and a hope which I was ashamed of shot through me. Perhaps, after all, I was not converted yet.

"Could you, dear?" she pressed kindly, as she saw my face brighten, "could you leave them all?"

I could not have told anyone how I was going to answer, and I was rather frightened when I heard

my own voice, as if it were an outsider's, saying emphatically: "No—no—no."

Miss Stanford was kind; she, who had spoken to many a hardened sinner, was not going to give up a mere girl who had admitted that her heart was touched. She appealed again, with a genuine earnestness in her voice; but now she had left the subject that moved me—Christ, who had lived and died—nothing she said made the faintest impression. I was, strangely enough, no longer painfully embarrassed. Miss Stanford looked at our house with the magnolia-tree in full bloom, at the conservatory, where the peaches were ripe, and at the close-cropped lawn in front of us. She said what I had often heard before, and it had always seemed to me a curiously flat and uninspiring statement, that I could not take any of this with me when I died.

I never even cared very much what things we took to the sea, and as, in her earnestness, Miss Stanford waved her hands to indicate the objects around, the most obvious were the garden-roller and the mowing machine. I was silent, and she told me that it was not now on this delightful earth, sown thick with the flowers that tempt us to destruction, that I should be glad of what I had done. Here I had so much to make me forget God. It might not be even in the near future—youth found so much joy in life—but it would be when I came to die that I should be so glad of the choice I had made. But death was not what I feared. It was fear of life that at times took hold of me, life robbed of all its greatest joy if

I accepted this call, and life without guidance and with a sense of dishonour if I ignored it. But the greatest dishonour of all would be not to tell the truth. I could not love God as Miss Stanford claimed that I should, and I had told her so. Strangely, in the moment of reprieve which this thought gave me, I began to breathe freely and feel a new comfort. How little Miss Stanford guessed, as I stood bewildered at her side, that she was helping me to choose, not her path that, as she thought, would lead to heaven, but another.

What she meant to say next I do not know; she had put her hand lightly on my head. "My dear", she began, and then, as she hesitated, I heard in the silence of the garden, the tea-bell. Tired and over-strained, I forgot all manners and fled, leaving her to follow alone.

At tea I sat at the bottom of the great table, and there were my sisters and brothers, a tea-urn and an erection of flowers between me and Miss Stanford. She was eating the home-made cake, she was praising the honey, the things that she could not take with her into eternity, and at my safe distance I could watch her with interest.

After tea, when she rose to go, some of our party gathered around her. She had known my father and mother and their brothers and sisters in childhood, and she was telling such interesting little stories of their lives that even the elder boys were listening.

"Don't go near", I whispered to Helen and pulled her dress.

"Why not?" she asked, too loud for politeness, and as I could not answer she joined the group.

"Katharine", called my mother. "You haven't seen Katharine, Sophie, we think she is like dear Anne."

I was blushing furiously. I always did when I was told I was like this dear dead relative. It seemed more than I deserved, and it made me a little fearful that I should soon follow her to the grave.

Miss Sophie said: "Oh, yes, but we made friends in the garden, didn't we, dear? We had the first of what I hope will be many a little talk."

Then I got behind Robert, the tallest of the party, and, sheltered by him, at the first possible moment I made my way unnoticed out of the room. I went and read in Alec's bedroom because he always had new books there, and because it was so quiet. I was as tired as if I had walked sixteen miles on Dartmoor with my father. Alec came in after a while, and smiled to find me curled up in his great basket chair. He got up on the steps that he used to reach his top shelf, and sitting on them took down a book and looked it through. Then, bringing a chair to the open window, he began to read the story of Nausicaa's meeting with Ulysses. Every incident was new to me, and I was fascinated. If only, instead of the mysterious business of our laundry, where the laundress was a woman about whom all I knew was that her temptations to be intemperate were greater than ours, I could drive to the sea with my brothers, wash clothes in the stream with my sisters, and play

catch on the beach—how the dark places in our lives would be lightened!

Alec laughed because I was so charmed at this description, and we stopped and talked a while. But after he had finished reading of the meeting with Ulysses we were silent.

I was taken out of my own life and its troubles by the story, and I was hardly conscious that Alec was again arranging his bookshelves. Suddenly I began to think in a region where before I had only felt. Scraps of books that I had read came back to me, full of a new meaning, and church membership became an insignificant thing when I thought of Alec on his steps so free from the trouble that had held me bound, and of Nausicaa whose life had taught her a courtesy so simple that she had no room for fear. At last we got up. "I wonder if Miss Stanford's gone", I said. "Oh, I should think so", Alec answered. "Whatever was that great talk in the garden about?" I had never spoken of the attempts that had been made to convert me to anyone before; they had troubled me too much, but now I turned happily to Alec: "Oh, it was only about my soul", I said.

CHAPTER VIII

A GOVERNESS

I SLIPPED into the dining-room one January evening and stopped a moment at the door, struck by the beauty of familiar things whose softened outlines were half revealed by the firelight. I loved the dining-room; it was so large, and so quiet between meal-times. I admired everything in it .As a tiny child I had often asked to be lifted up, that I might see how wonderfully the toes of the Cleopatra who sat on the great bronze clock were moulded. Now I stood on tiptoe, turned up the gas in the chandelier, and settled in a great arm-chair with my book. It was a large volume of Hans Andersen's fairy tales, which by a strange good fortune I had been given as a school-room prize.

I had had two other prizes; one was *Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra*, and the other an account of the six days of Creation with illustrations. *Zenobia* had left me cold, but the illustrations in the book on the Creation charmed me. The first was a large blob of something nebulous in a striking purple colour. Later there were dear little trees, some lizard-like creatures, a couple of lions, and then Adam and Eve, two wee figures who, with animated gestures, were pointing out the beauties of the garden to each other. They looked like Victorian tourists without their clothes. No wonder that I began to read *The Creation* with enthusiasm. But the vastness of the

subject, and perhaps the vagueness of the style of writing, oppressed me. Deeply discouraged, I had closed the book never to open it again. Now, as a reward for what was kindly described as my "general progress", I had received Hans Andersen's *Tales*, and was alone with them in a warm and silent room. But soon my father returned from business, and my mother came into the dining-room to pour out his tea. I got up, disappointed that I must move from my quiet corner to the school-room.

"Don't go", said my father, and my mother added, smiling: "We shan't talk secrets."

I curled up again in my big chair and finished the beautiful and cruel tale of the Little Mermaid. Then I rose, and held my hands a moment to the warmth of the blazing logs. My parents were talking quietly, and I moved away in a dream.

"Shut the door, dear", said my mother: and then again, in the same gentle voice, "Shut the door, dear". Only when I was at the school-room door did the meaning of the words reach me, and I ran back penitent as she was closing it herself.

In bed that night I read a very tedious chapter of Deuteronomy, for I was keeping a promise to read a chapter of the Bible every evening, and I should have thought it irreverent to pick and choose. Towards the end of the chapter I suddenly remembered that my father had said to my mother in the dining-room: "They are talking of starting a High School for Girls here."

We, I knew, were going in a week to have a new

governess, so it could not affect us. But I wondered, as I grew sleepy, why a school should be called a High School.

I often thought afterwards of that evening, for the Hans Andersen was the last joy I got out of our life in the school-room, and it was the first time I heard of a High School.

Four years had passed since I left Miss Locke's. The only part of my life at her school that I missed consciously was the five minutes' walk there and back. No one, who has not been brought up in a large family, knows the joy of being out alone on some rare May morning, or of stopping to crack the ice in the cart-ruts in winter with the heel of your boot without being told to "come on". The two governesses we had in those four years have left only a few impressions on my memory. I had gathered from scraps of grown-up talk that it was a great misfortune for a gentlewoman to have to work for her living and to be under the necessity of taking money from strangers. My mother said we ought to honour a lady who bravely accepted such a position, and she had made us feel that a special attitude of respectful deference was suitable. It is no wonder that, although we made intermittent efforts at considerate behaviour, there was a lack of naturalness in our relations.

Only once did our reserve break down, and we felt ourselves human beings. On the morning that the second governess left, she suddenly gave each of us a warm kiss, and said that no one where she

had taught had been so kind to her as my mother. I cried freely, and Helen, with a small choke in her voice, dashed away to get leave to pick all the best flowers in our hot-house for her. In those few minutes alone with Miss Darke I saw for the first time how young she looked, and how pretty she was; I forgot her humiliating position and actually begged her to stay in it. I told her I wished she could teach us always—always until the distant day when we should be finished. She said with a new-found frankness that she had taught us the little she knew. I protested, not guessing how very little it was. Then Helen was back with her flowers, and, ashamed of our show of feeling, we parted with shy good wishes, and she was gone from our lives for ever.

A week later Miss Ellen Clatworthy, the younger sister of my mother's old friend, came to us as governess. There was nothing of the unfortunate gentlewoman about her. Her mother had kept a successful school. Most of her family were teachers, and were proud of their calling. Our Miss Clatworthy, though she was the least studious of the family, had imbibed ideas about education from her infancy. From the first morning it was clear that, with her, a great change had come into our lives. Miss Clatworthy had no intention of simply sitting at the head of the table and hearing us repeat the lesson which we had learnt by heart. She was there, as she said, to develop our tastes, mould our characters, and prepare us for life.

We liked Miss Clatworthy. There was always the

suspicion of a twinkle in her small, keen, kindly eyes; although her mouth seemed good-naturedly to reproach this tendency. Her good temper could not be ruffled, and her self-respect lightened one corner of the darkness in which we had lived, and gave a promise of some unhoped for, and dimly foreseen new life for women. I can admire too, now, though I had not enough experience to appreciate it then, her courage in facing her own life and the old age which, unless some miracle happened, must be one of penury.

The dullness of our mornings was broken in the first few weeks by our interest in what Miss Clatworthy would say next. She took what was to us an entirely new view of any subject of our study. Our other governesses, as well as the Misses Locke, were not vexed at our shirking any serious effort in arithmetic; they had a half-acknowledged fear that the reasoning faculties of women might be developed at the expense of what they called "their more feminine attributes". Miss Clatworthy was willing and indeed anxious that our reasoning faculties should be developed. She was only afraid lest their existence should be revealed to the world. She approved of my love of figures, because arithmetic was "the least ostentatious of studies", and there was no fear that proficiency in it would draw undue attention to the little scholar.

I found after a time that this fear that we should display our accomplishments to admiring friends, and so lose the freshness of our feminine modesty,

affected her views on other subjects as well as arithmetic. For example, there was composition. She had a terror of what she called "female scribblers"; and how many ladies, she asked us, who essayed composition could hope to become anything better? We, while we should make every effort to do our best in this subject, should aim at utility and not at display. For this reason she wished us for the coming year, to limit our aim to writing a pleasing letter, suitable for any occasion that might arise. Such a letter might even be read aloud to a family circle and give domestic gratification without undue notoriety.

The study of Scripture, again, Miss Clatworthy took more seriously than had her predecessors. It was not enough, now that we were no longer children, to read the Bible. We must read the best commentaries, and be armed against the growing scepticism of the day. But even in religious matters we should aim at being good listeners rather than good talkers.

All this was very interesting to us, but, as Miss Clatworthy developed her theory of feminine life, we found ourselves in a new and less pleasant world. One change in our schoolroom was that we no longer lived in an atmosphere of approval. I know now that Miss Clatworthy was right in thinking our ease in learning by heart was a superficial quality, but when, after I had failed to be interested in an account of the building of the Menai Bridge, she wondered aloud whether there was not something

parrot-like in my type of mind, I was too much ruffled by the comparison with this bird to be able to consider its justice. Miss Clatworthy asked from us something that she called intelligent interest, and this was what we had never thought of giving to our lessons. Week by week and quarter by quarter she asked for it with more emphasis and attacked what she called our "plastic minds" with greater vigour; and week by week, ignorant little dreamers as we were, strength came to us to throw out effective defences against her influence. I think that if she could have put clearly in words what it was that she wanted to make of us, she would have said "little Miss Hannah Mores", and would have added, "modified, of course, by the fact that we could not hope to have either her great abilities or her active life". If we had understood her purpose, our opposition would have been open and fierce. As it was, she worked on bravely against our dull resentment of something which we felt the more strongly because we did not understand it.

If Miss Clatworthy's ideas on education seemed original, there was certainly nothing original in her method of teaching. She judged whether we were making progress, not by giving us written work, nor by examination papers, nor even by asking us questions, but by the intelligence of our expressions and the attentiveness of our attitude while she taught, or rather discoursed to us. I felt that this was unjust; for how could she really know that I had learnt, in the many weary hours spent at

chapel, to abstract myself so completely that I should hardly have heard a pistol-shot fired near me?

It was not only in the schoolroom that our lives were less happy than before. After a period during which Miss Clatworthy saw no improvement, she felt it her duty to let our parents know what she thought of us. Up to the time of her arrival I had been described quarter by quarter in a written report given to my parents as "an apt little pupil", or "a conscientious little scholar". Once, even I, was said to have "a gentle and studious nature". I expected to be spoken of in some such pleasing phrase until the great day came when I should learn to put up my hair with pins.

The first time there was a suggestion in our reports that we were not all that we should be, my mother thought that Miss Clatworthy must be run down, and sent her in a glass of sherry, with an egg beaten up in it, every morning. At the end of the next quarter my mother wondered whether it was her children who were run down, and ordered us more country air and Devonshire cream, and I heard her tell one of my aunts that my brain had always been too active for my strength. That was not the trouble now, for my brain in fact was in a state of demoralizing sluggishness. Miss Clatworthy said that, as we were no longer children, our studies should take more and more the form of listening to passages read aloud from the best authors and little discourses on these passages. We did less and less with our own hands and brains, and the few

hours in the week in which we were allowed to use either still stand out brightly in my memory. Once, after a talk about the Augustan Age of English Literature, I was allowed to learn and repeat a long piece of *The Rape of the Lock*. Miss Clatworthy liked Pope's playfulness. It did not matter that just then I detested it. It was something to do and I was grateful for it. We learnt, too (that we might be abreast of the time), some sweet little things of Adelaide Proctor; and Miss Clatworthy told us that her mother had known someone who knew the young authoress, who, as a child, had ventured to address Queen Victoria on her Coronation. Then she added the usual warning, that what was justifiable in cases of exceptional talent must not be attempted by mediocre minds.

Even our plain sewing was a relief. I remember one morning Helen's gaiety over a shirt which she was making. Miss Clatworthy, pleased at first at her liveliness while pursuing her useful task, reminded her before the morning was ended that wit was admirable if applied to suitable subjects, but that the gusset of a gentleman's shirt was not one of them. But in spite of such times of relief we were far from happy. My father grew troubled, and the cloud of disapproval over us did not, as it had done at first, lift when, in the early afternoon, Miss Clatworthy went home.

After Miss Clatworthy had been with us eighteen months, all this vague misery came to a climax in a fortnight which I shall never forget; and I went

through it without any idea that deliverance was at hand. It began by a complaint to my father of my want of intelligent interest in Scripture History. Every morning Miss Clatworthy read some passage from the Old Testament, which I had heard so often without attention that it had become impossible for me to realize the interest and beauty that were there. Lifting the huge Bible close to her eyes she read, rather fast and in a low voice, all the little notes in small print at the bottom of the text. The only words that used to reach me were: "Josephus says", "Josephus says". Who he was, and what he said I had never known. But on this unfortunate morning, not only were my thoughts far away, but I was caught sharpening a pencil under the table while Miss Clatworthy read.

My father was told, and he asked me to promise him to try to do better. I couldn't promise; as far as I knew myself, to listen to that lesson was beyond my power. It was useless for my father to urge that he only asked me to try. That was the very thing I felt would be impossible, and our family training had made us uncomfortably truthful. When my father left me he said very kindly that he saw that I was upset, and he would not press me now. But I knew that one day soon he would reopen the subject, and all joy in life was gone.

The very next day I was in trouble over my composition, a subject in which before Miss Clatworthy came I had shown the facility which she so rightly dreaded. Finding that we did not write

good letters to imaginary correspondents, she stuck bravely to the idea that that was a reason for doing nothing else. I had not shone the week before when I had had to write a letter to a girl friend with a gift of a water-colour depicting a rural scene which we had visited together. This week I sat in low enough spirits waiting for the subject of the day's letter. Miss Clatworthy paused in her talking, and asked us to write a letter to our father describing a storm seen from the Alps. I had never been in the Alps or seen anything higher than our Dartmoor Tors. I sat and looked at my paper while cold despair settled on my heart.

My Dear Papa,
Yesterday we went up Mont Blanc, and it came on to rain. . . .

I knew that wouldn't do, but I gazed at it for ten minutes, then courage came to me and I struck it out.

Dear Papa (I began again),
An awful thing is an Alpine storm.

I hesitated only a moment and altered this to:

A storm in the high Alps once seen is never forgotten.

A ray of hope shot through me. That, I was sure, was more like the style of the best authors. But a long time passed, and there was no more to be had like this. I tried to imagine myself in the Alps. But all I knew of Switzerland were some funny little pictures, in dots of blue and pink, of Lausanne and

Interlaken, with a foreground of tourists walking about in the sun. I could imagine no storm in such surroundings. My one sentence still looked at me and I looked at it. I was desperate, and I seized the pen and wrote:

DEAR PAPA,

When once more we sit by our own fireside, how much I shall have to tell you of nature in her wilder aspect.

The clock told me my time was nearly up; but Miss Clatworthy had said one should never send a letter to one's home without kind messages, not only to relatives, but to those people she called "the domestics". I was now in tremendous haste, and scribbled on:

My best love to Mamma, to my brothers and sisters, and my kind remembrances to the servants.

Your affectionate daughter,

KATHARINE.

I rather liked my letter. It was indeed short for sixty minutes' work. In my haste at the end my writing was hardly legible, and all punctuation had been left out, but my sentence "Once more by my own fireside, how much I shall have to tell you of nature in her wilder aspects", pleased me. But Miss Clatworthy was very severe. She did not know which of my failings was most serious—my handwriting, my punctuation, or my indifference to the lessons of nature. Helen was not praised for her letter, but was told that she at least had used the semi-colon with intelligence.

I felt sure this failure would be reported to my parents. My spirit was broken, and I dared not look forward. It was a slight relief to hear that next week, instead of asking us to write a letter, Miss Clatworthy proposed to read us one that she in the meantime would write on the same subject to show us how it should be done. Miss Clatworthy's letter was in its way a wonder. That we might the more appreciate the storm that was coming, she opened her letter by describing a scene in sunshine. We had read of smiling meadows, but here the mountains smiled in the distance, the cow-boy in his Alpine costume smiled, and Helen said afterwards that she understood that the cows smiled too. Then came the hurricane and the chariots of the storm began to dash ruthlessly about.

Next, Miss Clatworthy pointed out the importance of being at one with the Designer of the Universe. I may have missed a sentence or two, for it seemed rather a jump from this to a few words on modesty in woman, and a word too against agitators who roused discontent in the mob. Each sentence was of the same length and beautifully rounded in the style of the writers of Miss Clatworthy's mother's youth. At the end of the letter we were back again with the torrents, and with the lightning which it now appeared had brought death indifferently to a humble cottager and the travelling scion of a noble race. Then, with becoming expressions of filial affection, the letter closed.

It was little comfort that Helen whispered to

me, as we went for our walk, that this letter was a prose gem, and that she knew most of it by heart. I could only think that from now, through what looked to me the endless years, something like this was expected from me every week. I realized vividly at last how little I wanted to write like that, even if I could. But incessant disgrace is hard to bear. The day's walk was a dreadful one, and I did not know that it was the last I should take with Miss Clatworthy. We walked between the high walls of rich people's gardens and grunted polite assent when Miss Clatworthy admired their laburnums and copper beeches. When we reached more open country we stopped unfortunately in a field we had loved as children and where builders were now at work. Over the stream on whose banks great primroses had doubled themselves for joy of life there were planks that crushed the ferns and flowers. Miss Clatworthy, in the midst of heaps of planks and mortar, stood in a little house a brick high and waved her hands and pointed with her umbrella. She told us that the rentals of the houses would be from £40 to £140 a year—all select residences. She wished that for the larger houses the workman had spared more trees. The sight of the extension of her native town gave her imagination a real stimulus. She would have been a valued assistant to a modern town planner. Suddenly she addressed me.

I was standing shivering, for the wind was cold. I was perhaps a little barbarian, but these arrangements of brick that were to be the homes of men had

no interest for me. I only saw untidy heaps where my fairycups and primroses and fern-moss had been. Even the living stream could and would be destroyed. An appeal for sympathy and intelligent interest here was too much. I burst into tears, and the tears would not stop. Miss Clatworthy was really concerned and sorry, and took me back at once. Every kind word made me worse, and I went to bed and cried, much too long, before I slept.

I woke with a chill and a little fever. I couldn't believe my luck, when I heard that I was ill; and better still, as the quarter was nearly over, I was told that I should go straight to the country when I was well enough.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW SCHOOL

IN the summer of 1874 a great fear seized me. I thought that I was going to be sent to boarding-school, and that they would do—what it was their avowed object to do—they would finish me. Helen, I was sure, was too delicate to be sent away from home. Alice was too young; and I had to admit that my parents might think that I was more in need of "finishing" than any of my sisters. But I hated with all the hatred of which I was capable the idea of a boarding-school. For one thing, I dreaded being grown-up, chiefly, I think, because of the really ugly erection I should be obliged to make of my hair, and the fact that in my daily walks, because of the necessity of keeping my trailing skirts out of the dust and mud, I should only have one hand free. Beyond a doubt, boarding-school girls grew up quicker than others.

There were further objections. My cousin Nora had already had two quarters at a boarding-school. She had described her deportment lessons to me; lessons in which she was taught to rise from her chair with one movement. She had learnt to keep her hands folded when she was sitting, and, as if this were not humiliating enough, she had to move these folded hands now to the right, now to the left, according, as her teacher expressed it, to the position of the lady whom she happened to be addressing.

Nora told me that girls at her school had flirtations with boys, which were never found out; but that she, just for lowering a note tied to a piece of soap to tell a boy not to be a silly ass, was let in for the kind of row that I in my quiet home could form no idea of. Such an instance of flagrant injustice stirred deep feelings in me against all boarding-schools and their methods.

At home our life was divided quite simply into school hours and other hours: school people, such as governesses, and other people; school books and books; and, above all, school poets and real poets. School poets were Southey, Cowper, and Mrs. Hemans, brightened by the worst bits of Wordsworth and selected passages from the poems of Lord Byron. To me the real poets were the Brownings, Rossetti and his sister, and the author of the dear, queer little poems in the tiny book called *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Once in school hours I forgot this distinction, and when I was asked by Miss Clatworthy to give an example of a simile I quoted what first came to my lips, "My heart is like an apple-tree". "That, my dear, is rather foolish; try and remember one used by a good author", said Miss Clatworthy, and I was crushed. Tennyson out of school hours was treated respectfully as a poet, but Miss Clatworthy, looking at the ten little red volumes that I had been given for my birthday, said that her sister thought that it was a sad pity that in the *Idylls of the King* Tennyson should have dressed vice in satin.

Our schoolroom had been, and any school to which I went would I supposed be, a place where you marked time and from which you fled when the bell rang. But at a boarding-school no bell would set you free. There would be no brothers to take you for long walks on Dartmoor or to sail with you in the harbour. It is little wonder that, looking out from our dining-room bow-window one morning in July, in good health and with an abounding love of life, I thought quite seriously that I would rather be dead than go to such a place.

For a time there seemed to be just one possible way of escape. I might, I thought, "finish" myself. If I never forgot, for example, not only to put on but to button my gloves before I went out of doors. If I were daintily neat in my dress, if I did not use the most attractive slang words, surely I should not be sent away. I tried very hard to improve, and I did manage to do quite a nice little percentage of the things that I ought to have done. But I was disappointed to find how much was still expected of me. There was a whole vague region of conduct where I was hopelessly at sea, and about which all I knew was that a girl who had been "finished" would act quite differently from the way in which I acted. I seemed to create an atmosphere of disapproval even where I had the best intentions. I knew that I did not give the right kind of greeting to an unloved guest. A compliment from a stranger made me blush, almost to the point of tears. If my mother just indicated in the drawing-room when

there was company that I had been "seen" long enough, I fled radiant, as if a reprieve had come from prison. It is no wonder that after a while I began to despair, although I still made spasmodic efforts to do what was expected of me.

One day, when I thought that everyone had gone from the dining-room, I went back because I had forgotten to fold my table-napkin. I had left it "anyhow" just as if I had been a boy. As I came in at the door, I saw that my mother was still sitting at the coffee-tray. She was reading a letter to Eleanor, and I caught these words:

"—but we do make an occasional exception of the daughter of a refined tradesman of means——"

I felt stunned. I was sure now that it was all over. Such a letter must be from the mistress of a boarding-school, and who could the "occasional exception" be, but me?

Eleanor, seeing me, said: "Come in, Katharine"; and then, as I still stood trembling, finding it hard to move, she added: "Is anything the matter"?

"Oh no", I said, and forced myself to come to the table and fold my napkin.

Eleanor was looking out of the window. I don't know whether she had forgotten that I was there, but she said:

"It isn't altogether pleasant to be an exception."

I expected that my mother would say "hush", and that the conversation would be continued when I had gone upstairs; but instead of that, my mother

did a most unusual and beautiful thing. Turning to me she said quite simply:

"Katharine, would you like to go to boarding-school?"

"No, no, no", I gasped, with a rush of tears. My mother was taken aback at the warmth of my feeling, and for a moment she was silent. When she spoke, it was to say very gently:

"Then you are not to go, dear."

To thank her would have meant a fresh outburst of tears, so I just turned and ran into the garden.

As I went, I heard my mother say to Eleanor:

"But where on earth are they to go? Miss Norman would take them, but your father says the education there would disgrace a National School."

It was full summer, and the flowers that I cared for most were over, but there were long shadows of the trees on the grass and some overblown late roses on the rose-bushes. A picture of them is stamped on my mind, as only those beautiful things are that one sees after escaping a great danger.

The question of boarding-schools settled, I would quite cheerfully have gone to the school where my father said the teaching would disgrace "a National". In our lives, up to this time, a new governess had come and gone as quietly as a new drawing-room carpet, and the ninth child would no more have expected to be consulted about the one than about the other.

Freed from my great fear and absorbed in our

holiday life, I hardly listened to the talk that went on around me.

It was only very gradually that I grew aware that everyone was discussing our education and a new school called the "High School for Girls" that was to be opened in the autumn. From what I heard, it did not seem likely that we should go to it. The most curious rumours began to spread as to the ideas of the founders of this school.

It was reported, for instance, and came to us through a cousin, that the new school would recognize no distinction between subjects (branches of study, I think she called them) suitable for the female mind and those suitable for the male.

I had always taken it as much for granted as the colour of my eyes and hair, that I, tone-deaf as a fish, should spend long hours in unintelligent practising. It had become a matter of course to Helen and me that we should have selected extracts from the best authors read aloud to us. At stated times we parsed and analysed English sentences, while at rarer intervals we wrote essays on some moral or literary subject. We copied too, in charcoal, a curious kind of water plant that was found in the drawing copies of the time. Much of this work was soothing in its nature, and had helped me, as a sedative would have done, to pass hours in the schoolroom. No wonder I was conservative, and did not like to face the possibility of spending my mornings, as I knew my brothers did, on Latin and Greek and mathematics; subjects that I foresaw would make

it necessary for me to use my brains in school hours.

So I began to listen with pleasure to everything that was said which confirmed my own opinion about our education; and then I went off to more interesting themes and pursuits with my brothers and sisters. I was glad to hear one of my eldest cousins say that she thought that this new rage for female education would soon pass. She pointed out, as an encouraging sign, that the passion for spelling-bees was not what it had been. Another day I heard our doctor talking to my mother, and he was telling her that unfeminine games would be played at this school, and that they would be played in unfeminine costumes. Surely that settled it. A school friend of Ralph's, too, spoke very seriously on the subject. We were all three sitting on the grass slope one day waiting for tea when he said, with a look of Byronic despair, that if this kind of thing was allowed to go on, the "very foundations of domestic life would be shaken". Then he added, in a still gloomier tone, that it was only "the thin end of the wedge". I did not think that Ralph treated this opinion with sufficient respect when he airily remarked:

"And a jolly good thing too!"

There was Monkey in the work-room against the school. She said quite frankly, what was hinted at in the drawing-room, that gentlemen didn't like "bluestockings", and she added, what I had only heard her say before when some serious change was mooted, "And what next, I wonder?"

I had begun to think of the new High School as a subject for indignation among the old-fashioned, and of careless banter among the enlightened, when one day I received a shock. I heard Eleanor, who had saved me from boarding-school—Eleanor, whose frankness with her elders was like a spring in a dry land—quoting the remark of my cousin about spelling-bees that I had taken quite seriously, as if it were funny.

After this I began to listen with real attention to all the talk that went on about our education. I wondered at each point that was raised what Eleanor, under a detached and slightly ironical manner, really meant. I could not even be sure that she was impressed by the elder Miss Clatworthy, who said that she welcomed this school as an experiment, although she thought the Council had made a mistake in aiming at such large numbers. She understood that it was their intention to open in the autumn with as many as a hundred girls! She doubted whether it would be possible to be educated in such a crowd, and to retain the refinement of a gentlewoman. Then, looking at me, she said that in cases of retiring and sensitive natures she thought it would be particularly trying.

I watched Eleanor anxiously. From her polite manner, she appeared to admit the difficulty. But to my surprise she changed the subject. It was an unusual thing in our house to change a subject that was of interest to the elder Miss Clatworthy. Still, Eleanor did it. She said that she had met Mr. Dove,

the Congregational minister, in town, and that she thought that he was going to send his daughters to the new school. Everyone listened attentively, for he was a very enlightened man. He had told Eleanor that having satisfied himself that each one of his daughters could make a bed, a pudding, and a shirt, he thought that the higher education would do them good rather than harm. Then Eleanor turned to me:

"Poor Katharine," she said, "there isn't much chance for you, I'm afraid."

What did she mean? Was the High School, after all, something desirable? And if so, was Eleanor serious when she said that I had a poor chance of going there?

I wondered very much what my mother thought about it all. I knew a day or two later that the elder Miss Clatworthy's fear of the large numbers had troubled her. I was present when she happened to consult her old friend Grace Ellen on the matter. She still valued Grace Ellen's judgment highly, in spite of her advocacy of the Women's Rights ladies. I heard Grace Ellen say that she thought that the tone of a school depended more on *esprit de corps* than on the actual numbers and social position of those who attended it. My mother seemed satisfied, and I, although I did not understand the expression, felt a return of respect for Grace Ellen for having used it.

And then one day I knew that it was settled. We had a great many friends to tea with us. Our own Baptist minister was there with his wife, and Mr.

Dove the Congregationalist with his. My father was at home, and we were having tea handed round in the drawing-room, which was an innovation. Helen and I, and even Alice, all dressed in white muslin, were allowed to pass the home-made cakes.

My mother and a friend sat on the sofa, and when tea was over and I was showing a photograph album to a girl a little older than myself, I heard scraps of their conversation. My mother's friend said gently that she had often thought that if unmarried ladies had a little more food for their minds it would be a good thing; for they sometimes took what seemed to her an undue interest in their neighbour's affairs.

So she, too, was in favour of this school.

A group stood around my father's tall figure on the hearth-rug. Robert was home from London. Grace Ellen and several others joined in the talk. They discussed once more the point of the suitability of certain subjects for the minds of girls. In favour of no distinction of sex, Lady Jane Grey and Hannah More were mentioned, and my father added Caroline Herschel. One of our guests, a woman whose great but untrained ability had worked considerable mischief in her family, said very modestly: "Yes—yes—but they were *such* exceptional ladies!"

There was a moment's pause. The girl for whom I was mechanically turning pages of the album began to talk, and I missed a good deal of what followed, though I gathered that Robert was defending the new school. When next I looked up, my father, whose eyes were turned longingly towards the garden,

was saying, with some emphasis: "As for teaching the same subjects to girls as to boys, I have always said, 'Why not?' "

There was silence in the group around him, and turning to Eleanor he suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Dove might like to see the garden. The whole party filed out. My mother stopped me for a moment, and asked me to get the garden scissors and cut flowers for all the party. As I cut, my father's "Why not?" rang in my ears. I had no longer any doubt. We were going to the new school. Monkey's views, Ralph's young friend's horror of the "thin edge of the wedge", Miss Clatworthy's fear for our refinement—all these things would count as nothing before my father's "Why not?"

Silent and puzzled I awaited my fate.

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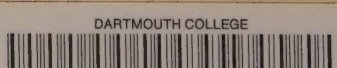

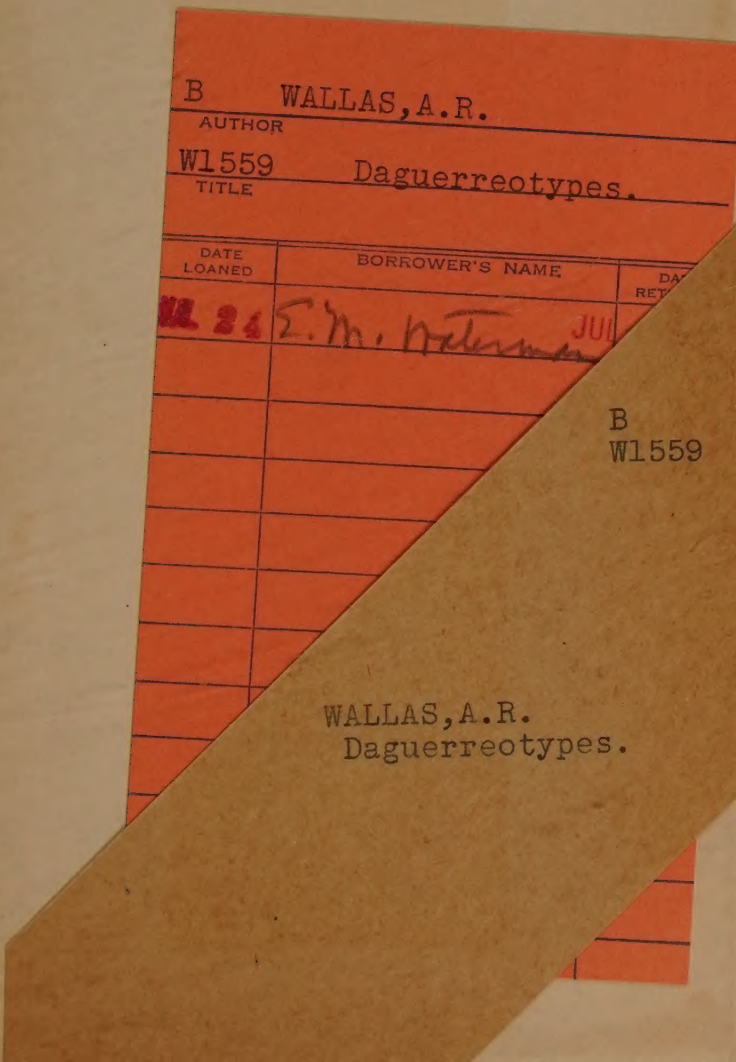
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